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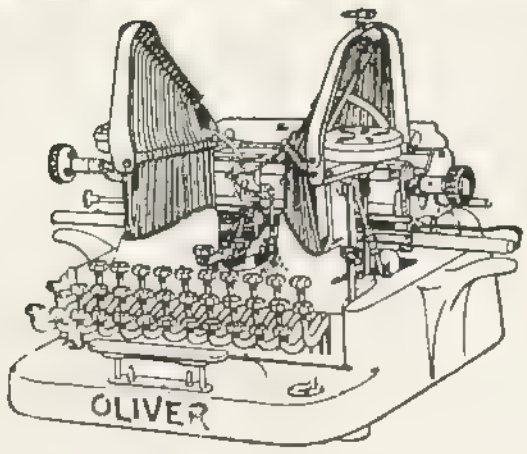

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THE
ENGLISH REVIEW
FEBRUARY 1910

MODERN POETRY

Three Poems

By C. F. Keary

THE WILLOWS

YE willow-trees that bend
Votaries and sentinels o'er this magic stream,
What voices have ye heard
At dark—what speech ye might not apprehend,
Yet gloried in? What midday dream
Shone on you from the blue unreached depths? What word
Passed through the rushes, whispering
Of dreadful secrets and the transformed king?

THE PURPLE EMPEROR

SOMETIMES the edges of his wings are golden,
Sometimes like leaves, faded in a summer wood.
But his cloak ever is the olden
Badge of imperial blood.
And large enamels of a turquoise stone
Loosely he wears, as Cæsar wore his zone.

THE MILL

MORE than a mill art thou—a history
Guarded by dreams and magic. The golden grain,
That like a royal hostage stoops beneath
Thine arch, shall hope in vain

Aid from the elves its playfellows. For they
Themselves are captive to thy wizardry.
Who once hath heard thine ever-booming round
For the bright sward, for sunshine, or the day
No wish nor memory hath.
By thee too all my thoughts imprisoned are,
And fettered to thy low enchanting sound.
A witch's lullaby it seems, and tells
Lost tales of ancient war,
Of rivals and of moonbeam-woven spells ;
Or farther yet, yet nearer, votaries
Unshamed, who through the forest raise their cries
To Hecate's misty car.

* * * * *

And all the while, without thy cave,
Dark wheel, like travellers on the road,
The Ages pass, that Pilgrims are, his load
Each bearing, each his knotty stave.

Three Poems

By Anne Macdonell

THE SOWER

Grey as the bare spring sandy soil,
Up and down the Sower goes,
Muttering in time to his slow toil
A song whose end he never knows.

Over the unawaken'd land,
He half-asleep, alive his arm and hand,
He sows and sows,
While from the sea the north wind blows,
And scatters his seed in a white mist,—
Falleth the seed as the north wind list.

Too young the sun that would fain be kind ;
And wanton is the wind.
What careth the sea
For the landsmen you and me ?—
If the land be green or grey ?—
If our one field
A golden harvest yield,
Or our starveling crop decay ?—
But whatever the wind may send,
He soweth, and asketh not the end.
We, rasp'd and hustled by untimely blasts,
Bide churlish while the north wind lasts.—
The end of all our sowing vain !
For our dear soil what gain ?—
And plaining stays our hand.

O shadowy Sower, old and grey,
Full seventy seed-times lie behind to-day.
Thou sowest and sowest and goest thy way
Unquestioning, whatsoe'er befalls.
Each Spring the Mother calls.
Answereth thy endless song to her command
Over the eager or the sullen land.
Little thou hopest from thy strife ;

And less thou wist
Of laws fulfill'd in thee.—
Thou art a shadow, and thy seed's a mist;
But many a merry harvester is dead
Who's lightly reap'd the fields thou'st blindly fed.—
And Thou remainest.—Thou art Life!

HERE AND THERE

Fast in the deep and lonely night,
Fear by my bed and Hope afar—
I, gripp'd in the Accuser's might—
My little window frames a star,
That smiles and sings, unvex'd and free,
Solace and most sweet company.

O shining worlds, so high, so high!
And do ye tire, and do ye fear?
And have ye wandering hearts that cry,
And dream that Peace has nested here?
And is our Sorrow seen afar,
Transfigur'd to a happy star?

A THANKSGIVING FOR SEVEN GOOD THINGS

Praise and high thanks for the good wide spaces,
Where cloud, and wing, and star are incident.
O'er storm-swept dunes, resistant desert places,
Man reinless rides his Joy, his Discontent.

Prais'd be the Sibyl Shadow! All confiding,
I huddle, watching 'neath her dream-wove cloak
(For the forlorn proscript what friendly hiding!)
The secret muster of the old hill-folk.

Deep praise for Silence! When her dusk wing brusheth
The topmost spires o' the plain, oh, what ease!
But the fin'd ear she waketh while she husheth,
Dark keeper of the House of Harmonies.

Praise to the high and stark and stony places !
Glittering they tower under a fierce white moon,
That scarreth, seareth all but pilgrim faces ;
Scaleless their sides to all but pilgrim shoon.

I will give thanks for ruin'd things and broken.
Beauty built high where now the vagrants cower.
Though Death has pass'd, and Scorn has left its token,
From Beauty's dust grows an immortal flower.

I will betake me to the long-forgotten.
The hidden, tangled, thorny pathway leads
Where Time upon an old myth hath begotten
The new Evangel that my spirit needs.

Prais'd be the unsurrendering mind,—the useless,
The wasteful superfluities of love !
Over our vain and fluttering excess
Broods in calm l'ght the Heavenly Dove.

A Captive in Dun Angus

(Aran-môr, Ireland)

By Ethel Rolt Wheeler

The grey seas, the grey stones, the white flame of gulls.

The sea-deeps, the cliff-steeps, the stone rings of walls,
Enfold close and hold close our free souls made slaves,—
The sea falls, the sea cries, the heart cries and calls,
With low moans, with loud moans, with old pain of waves
That break on the stones.

The grey skies, the white gulls, the white flame of foam,
And death grips and death dulls the sick hope of home.

The grey seas, the black ships, the wild wings of gulls.

From hence poured a dense horde with white flash of oars,
Who bore down and tore down our thin pale of staves—
Then back swayed the black raid : and dim grew our shores.
A bright ash, a white ash, a low ridge of graves,
A white pile of bones.

The black beak, the black sail, the white flame of foam,
And corpse limp and corpse pale the dead hope of home.

The grey seas, the grey stones, the fierce shriek of gulls.

Two Poems

By Francis M. Hurd

THE EXILE

My father had many oxen
  Yet all are gone ;
My father had many servants ;
  I sit alone.

He followed the Southern women,
  He drank of the Southern wines ;
He fought in their foreign quarrels—
  My lot declines.

I will go to the Southern houses ; I will hide 'mid the maids at hire ;
I will bear the meat to their tables and carry wood to their fire.
Where the chink of the rat and the mouse is, all night long shall I lie
Awake in the byres and the stables. . . . When the white moon looks from the sky
And over the shadowed roof-trees, and the wind blows warm from the South,
With the heavy tears on my eyelids and the weary sighs in my mouth
I shall hear through the gaping gables how the Southern night-bird sings
Of the slaves who were once Queens' daughters and hinds the seed of Kings.

My father had many oxen
  Yet all are gone ;
My father had many servants ;
  I sit alone.

TO GERTRUDE

It's very late : it's very cold :
And you're too young and I'm too old.
You've your small cares and I've small ease.
Come nestle down across my knees.

Stir up the fire : draw out the chair,
Kick off the shoes : let down the hair :
Your white kimono now !—Disclose
The little budget of your woes.
You shall have both my hands to hold :
It's very late : it's very cold.

It's very cold : it's very late. The snow
Lies upon all the housetops. But we two
Have each of us such ancient work to do :
You sell caresses : I, a song or so :
And so we please each other . . . Yes : I know.
It's very late : it's very cold. The snow
Blocks all the tram-lines. Here's a pleasant ease ;
Your arm-chair and a fire : curtains and peace.
And, since you rest me, lying on my knees—
When to my niche I'm hoisted—on that day
Stand up and claim your leaf of poet's bay.
Do it : be bold !
I shall not shun you in my memories ;
You shall have, then as now, a hand to hold.

It's very late : it's very cold :
You keep your bargains, I'll be bold
To say, more loyally than half the men
I'll meet to-morrow, any other when
Or any other where.—My dear, that's Fate!
Run off to bed. Good-night ! It's very late

Three Sketches

By Anton Tchehov

I. AT A COUNTRY COTTAGE

Two young people who had not long been married were walking up and down the platform of a little country station. His arm was round her waist, her head was almost on his shoulder, and both were happy.

The moon peeped out from the drifting cloudlets and frowned, as it seemed, envying their happiness and regretting her tedious and utterly superfluous virginity. The still air was heavy with the fragrance of lilac and wild cherry. Somewhere in the distance beyond the line a corncrake was calling.

"How beautiful it is, Sasha, how beautiful!" murmured the young wife, "it all seems like a dream. See, how sweet and inviting that little copse looks! How nice those solid, silent telegraph-posts are! They add a special note to the landscape, suggesting humanity, civilisation in the distance. . . . Don't you think it's lovely when the wind brings the rushing sound of a train? . . ."

"Yes. . . . But what hot little hands you've got. . . . That's because you're excited, Varia. . . . What have you got for our supper to-night?"

"Chicken and salad. . . . It's a chicken just big enough for two. Then there's the salmon and sardines that were sent from town."

The moon hid her face behind the clouds again. Human happiness reminded her of her own loneliness, of her solitary couch beyond the hills and the dales.

"The train is coming!" said Varia, "how jolly!"

Three eyes of fire could be seen in the distance. The stationmaster came out on the platform. Signal lights flashed here and there on the line.

"Let's see the train in and go home," said Sasha, yawning. "What a splendid time we are having together, Varia; it's so splendid, I can hardly believe it's true!"

The dark monster crept noiselessly alongside the platform and came to a standstill. They caught glimpses of sleepy faces, of hats, and shoulders at the dimly lighted windows.

"Look! look!" they heard from one of the carriages. "Varia and Sasha have come to meet us! There they are! . . . Varia! . . . Varia! . . . Ach!"

Two little girls skipped out of the train and hung on Varia's neck. They were followed by a stout, middle-aged lady, and a tall, lanky gentleman with grey whiskers; behind them came two schoolboys, laden with bags; behind the schoolboys, the governess, and behind the governess, the grandmother.

"Here we are, here we are, dear boy!" began the whiskered gentleman, squeezing Sasha's hand. "I expect you're sick of waiting for us! You have been pitching into your old uncle for not coming down all this time, I dare say! Kolya, Kostya, Nina, Fifa . . . children! Kiss cousin Sasha! We're all here, the whole troop of us, just for three or four days. . . . I hope we shan't be too many for the cottage. You mustn't let us put you out!"

At the sight of their uncle and his family, the young couple were horror-stricken. While his uncle talked and kissed them, Sasha had a vision of their little cottage: he and Varia giving up their three little rooms and all the pillows and bedding to their guests; the salmon, the sardines, the chicken, all devoured in a single instant; the cousins plucking the flowers in their little garden, spilling the ink, filling the cottage with noise and confusion; his aunt talking all day long about her ailments and her papa's having been a Baron von Vintich. . . .

And Sasha looked almost with hatred at his young wife and whispered:

"It's you they've come to see! . . . Damn them!"

"No, it's you," answered Varia, pale with anger. "They're your relations, they're not mine!"

And turning to her visitors, she said with a smile of welcome:

"Welcome to the cottage!"

The moon came out again. She seemed to smile, as though she were glad she had no relations. Sasha, turning his head away to hide his angry and despairing face, struggled to give a note of cordial welcome to his voice, as he said:

"It is jolly! Welcome to the cottage!"

II. THAT HATEFUL BOY

Ivan Ivanitch, a young man of attractive appearance, and Anna Semionovna, a young girl with a saucily turned-up nose, walked down the steep river-bank and sat down on a rustic seat. The seat was at the very edge of the river and in the midst of thick willow bushes. It was a delightful spot. Sitting there you were hidden from all the world: nobody could see you but the fishes and the spiders darting like lightning over the water.

The young people were provided with rods, little nets, jars of worms and other fishing tackle. Sitting down, they immediately began fishing.

"I am glad we are alone at last," Ivan began, looking about him. "I have so much to say to you, Anna Semionovna . . . ever so much . . . when first I saw you . . . You have a bite! . . . I realised what my life was for, I realised who was the idol to whom I was destined to dedicate a life of honourable effort. . . . It must be a huge . . . it's biting! . . . When I saw you, I loved for the first time, loved with passion! . . . Wait a minute . . . let it get a good hold. . . . Tell me, dear one, I beseech you, . . . may I hope . . . not that my feeling is returned . . . that I dare not dream of . . . may I hope for . . . Pull it out!"

Anna Semionovna flung up the hand that held the rod, and tugged at it, giving a little scream. A silvery greenish fish flashed through the air.

"Heavens! It's a perch! Make haste! It's got off!"

The perch dropped off the hook, leaped over the grass towards its native element and plopped into the water.

In trying to seize the fish, Ivan had by some accident got hold of Anna's hand and by some accident pressed it to his lips. She drew it away, but too late. Their lips—by some accident again—met in a kiss. The kiss was followed by others and then by vows and protestations.

Happy moments. . . . But in this earthly existence no happiness is unalloyed. Happiness usually carries some poison lurking within it, or else is poisoned by some outside influence. So it was with these young people.

While they were kissing, they suddenly heard a laugh. They looked towards the river, and were aghast to see the naked figure of a boy up to his waist in the water. It was Kolya, Anna's schoolboy brother. He stood there in the water, watching the young people with a fiendish grin.

"Aha! . . . kissing! . . ." he said. "All right! I shall tell mamma!"

"I trust that as a man of honour you won't . . ." murmured Ivan, flushing. "It's sneaking to spy, and low, cowardly and dishonourable to tell tales. . . . I hope that as a man of honour and a gentleman . . ."

"Give me a rouble and I won't tell," said the "man of honour." "I'll tell if you don't!"

Ivan took a rouble out of his pocket and gave it to Kolya, who clasped it in his wet palm with a whistle of triumph and swam away.

The young people did not kiss again that day.

Next day Ivan brought Kolya a box of paints and a ball from the town and his sister gave him all her pill-boxes. Then she had to give him her studs with dogs' heads on them. The wicked boy was obviously revelling in the position and with a view to further gains kept careful watch on them. Wherever Ivan and Anna went he followed them. He would not leave them alone a moment.

"The scoundrel!" Ivan muttered, grinding his teeth. "So small and so great a scoundrel! What will he be when he is older?"

During the whole of June, Kolya gave the poor lovers no peace. He threatened to tell tales, exacted presents, and never let them out of his sight. Nothing would satisfy him, he even began to talk about a watch. It came at last to promises of a watch.

One day at dinner just as the pudding was being helped, he suddenly gave a chuckle, winked and said to Ivan:

"Shall I tell? Eh?"

Ivan blushed furiously and took a bite of his serviette instead of the pudding. Anna jumped up from the table and rushed out of the room.

The young people remained in this plight till the end of August, till the day when Ivan made Anna a formal proposal. Oh, what a blissful day that was! After interviewing the parents of his beloved and obtaining their consent, the first thing Ivan did was to run out into the garden and look for Kolya. When he found him, he almost sobbed with joy, as he seized the hateful boy by the ear. Anna ran up—she too was looking for Kolya—and seized him by the other ear. And it was a sight to see the ecstasy on the faces of the lovers while Kolya wept and besought them:

"Please . . . Please . . . I won't . . . Aie! aie! dear . . . kind . . . good . . . forgive me!"

And afterwards they confessed to one another, that all the while they were in love, they had never had a moment of such happiness, such perfect bliss as when they were pulling the hateful boy's ears.

III. A GENTLEMAN FRIEND

The charming Mademoiselle Vanda found herself on leaving the hospital in a position she had never been in before: without a home to go to or a farthing in her pocket. What was she to do?

The first thing she did was to visit a pawnbroker's and pawn her turquoise ring—her one piece of jewellery. They gave her a rouble for the ring . . . but what can you get for a rouble? You can't buy for that sum a fashionable short jacket, nor a big hat, nor a pair of bronze shoes, and without those things she had a feeling of being, as it were, undressed. She felt as though the very horses and dogs were staring and laughing at the plainness of her dress. And clothes were all she thought about: the question what she should eat and where she should sleep did not trouble her in the least. "If only I could meet a gentleman friend," she thought to herself, "I could get some money. . . . There isn't one who would refuse me, I know. . . ."

But no gentleman she knew came her way. It would be easy enough to meet them in the evening at the "Renaissance," but they wouldn't let her in at the "Renaissance" in that shabby dress and with no hat. What was she to do?

After long hesitation, when she was sick of walking and sitting and thinking, Vanda made up her mind to fall back on her last resource: to go straight to the lodgings of some gentleman friend and ask for money.

She pondered which to go to. "Misha is out of the question—he's a married man. . . . The old chap with the red hair will be at his office at this time. . . ."

Vanda remembered a dentist, called Finkel, a converted Jew, who six months ago had given her a bracelet and on whose head she had once emptied a glass of beer at supper at the German Club. She was awfully pleased at the thought of Finkel.

"He'll be sure to give it me, if only I find him at home," she thought as she walked in his direction. "If he doesn't, I'll smash all the lamps in the house."

Before she reached the dentist's door she had thought out her plan of action: she would run laughing up the stairs, dash

into the dentist's room and demand twenty-five roubles. But as she touched the bell, this plan seemed to vanish of itself. Vanda began suddenly to feel frightened and nervous, which was not at all her way. She was bold and saucy enough at supper parties, but now, dressed in everyday clothes, feeling herself in the position of an ordinary person asking a favour who might be refused admittance, she felt suddenly timid and humiliated. She was ashamed and frightened.

"Perhaps he has forgotten me by now," she thought, hardly daring to pull the bell, "and how can I go up to him in such a dress, looking like a beggar or some working girl? . . ."

And she rang the bell irresolutely.

She heard steps coming: it was the porter.

"Is the doctor at home?" she asked.

She would have been glad now if the porter had said "No," but the latter, instead of answering, ushered her into the hall and helped her off with her coat. The staircase impressed her as luxurious, magnificent, but of all its splendours what caught her eye most was an immense looking-glass in which she saw a ragged figure without a fashionable jacket, without a big hat and without bronze shoes. And it seemed strange to Vanda that now she was humbly dressed and looked like a laundress or sewing girl, she felt ashamed and no trace of her usual boldness and sauciness remained, and in her own mind she no longer thought of herself as Mademoiselle Vanda, but as the Nastia Kanavkin she used to be in old days. . . .

"Walk in, please," said a maid-servant, showing her into the consulting-room. "The doctor will be here in a minute. Sit down."

Vanda sank into a soft arm-chair.

"I'll ask him to lend it me," she thought, "that will be quite proper, for after all I do know him. If only that servant would go. I don't like to ask before her. What does she want to stand there for?"

Five minutes later the door opened and Finkel came in. He was a tall dark Jew with fat cheeks and bulging eyes. His cheeks, his eyes, his chest, his body—all of him was so well-fed, so loathsome and repellent. At the "Renaissance" and the German Club he had usually been rather tipsy and he used to spend his money freely on women and be very patient with their pranks (when Vanda, for instance, poured the beer on his head, he simply smiled and shook his finger at her); now he had a cross, sleepy expression and looked solemn and stiff like a police captain, and he kept chewing something.

"What can I do for you?" he asked without looking at Vanda.

Vanda looked at the serious countenance of the maid and the smug figure of Finkel, who apparently did not recognise her, and she turned red.

"What can I do for you?" repeated the dentist, a little irritably.

"I—I've got toothache," murmured Vanda.

"Aha. . . . Which is the tooth? Where? . . ."

Vanda remembered she had a hole in one of her teeth.

"At the bottom . . . on the right," she said.

"H'm. . . . Open your mouth."

Finkel frowned and, holding his breath, began examining the tooth.

"Does it hurt?" he asked, digging into it with a steel instrument.

"Yes," Vanda replied, untruthfully.

"Shall I remind him?" she was wondering. "He would be sure to remember me. But that servant! Why will she stand there?"

Finkel suddenly snorted like a steam-engine right into her mouth, and said:

"I don't advise you to have it stopped. That tooth will never be worth keeping anyhow."

After probing the tooth a little more and soiling Vanda's lips and gums with his tobacco-stained fingers, he held his breath again, and put something cold into her mouth. Vanda suddenly felt a sharp pain, cried out and clutched at Finkel's hand.

"It's all right, it's all right," he muttered, "don't you be frightened! That tooth would have been no use to you any way . . . you must be brave . . ."

And his tobacco-stained fingers, smeared with blood, held up the tooth to her eyes, while the maid approached and put a basin to her mouth.

"You wash out your mouth with cold water when you get home, and that will stop the bleeding," said Finkel.

He stood before her with the air of a man expecting her to go, waiting to be left in peace.

"Good-day," she said, turning towards the door.

"H'm. And how about my fee?" inquired Finkel, in a jesting tone.

"Oh yes!" Vanda remembered, blushing, and she handed the Jew the rouble that had been given her for her ring.

When she got out into the street she felt more overwhelmed with shame than before, but now it was not her poverty she was

ashamed of. She was unconscious now of not having a big hat and a fashionable jacket. She walked along the street, spitting blood, and brooding on her life, her ugly, wretched life, and the insults she had endured, and would have to endure to-morrow, and next week and all her life up to the very day of her death.

"Oh! how awful it is! My God, how fearful!"

Next day, however, she was back at the "Renaissance" and dancing there. She had on an enormous, new, red hat, a new fashionable jacket, and bronze shoes. And she was taken out to supper by a young merchant up from the country.

(*Translated by* CONSTANCE GARNETT)

Snow and Sand

By Edward Thomas

The wind has as many voices as men have moods, and more. It can whimper like a child hiding alone. It can rave as if it were one of the gods of the early men, running wild in the night over a diminished world. It can whisper love and hate and satiety. It will breathe of doubt, apprehension, trepidation. Now it seems the youngest thing between earth and heaven, newly made and fresh as bubbles on the brook. And now again it is an old wind. Hundreds of times it is an old wind, so old that it has forgotten everything except that it is old and that all other things among which it wanders are young and have changed and will change; and it mumbles fitfully that what is young now will in a moment be old, and that to be old is nothing, nothing; and then in one breath it scatters the last handful of the dead tree's dust and flutters the first leaf of spring. While it covers up in sand the castle ruins that stood, like the two last teeth of an old hound, on a hillock above the sea, it thinks it but yesterday that it unloosed the hair of the princess looking from the new-built tower of that castle towards the west. She sighs with fulness of beauty but ceases not to watch from the high window. The wind powders her hands and dulls her eyes with sea sand. She droops her eyelids yet looks still to the west. But now her eyes are fast shut and it is only her soul that can see through the milky blue lids of her blind eyes. The sand is hissing about her hair, but she cannot hear it; it is poured into the room like water. For the wind has filled itself with sand as but a little while before it filled itself with the gold of sunset and the scent of the rose; and the heavy billows of sand are drowning the sea-birds. The princess cannot hear the wrath of the sea any more than if she had eyes she could see it, through the sand-storm, baying at the foot of the tower. She cannot feel the sand rising above her waist. She cannot cry out or fly; she has no desire or motion. There is not one left in the castle to cry out to her or to come to her door; for some have broken forth to die in the sea, and some have drunk

the sand and have died like her amid the mist and hiss of the floating and whirling dunes. The tower plunges through the solid air into the black sea and buries the corpse of the betrothed. The wind blows her dust into my face as it shakes the drab grass on the last stones of the tower. It is an old wind. A minute ago it had forgotten such a little thing as the tempest of sand and sea, the overthrow of the tower, the maiden's death, and her black hair spread out by the slow wave. But now it has remembered as it whirls the sand and the crossing flakes of snow together, above the ruins of the tower, the drab grasses, the homeless dunes. There is nothing else to do but to remember here. It is a sea of solid waves, of sand-hills that behold the mountains, the sea and the sky, and of sand-valleys that behold only the sand-hills and the sky. Some of the hills are stony grey or brown with dead bracken, some of the valleys yellow-green with moss and with moss-like turf, or grey with the sprawling roots and the flaked leaves of little willows. But most are bare of all but the corpse tresses of yellow grass, and the wind carves ceaselessly and erases its carving, and in small hollows bows the pointed stem of the grass and guides it so as to draw a circle upon the sand. Many skeletons of birds lie on the sand, but there is not a bird in the air, no sound but the shifting of the grains as the wind broods. There is nothing but change, unresting, monotonous change. The wind is counting the sands and going over memories which are as the sands. One hill is like the next and all the valleys are the same except one, wider and more level than the rest. It is paved with blue rippled water and on the water are myriads of pale birds that are sending up myriads to whirl and cry in the wind. The rushy margin is strewn with delicate bones and feathers among the snowflakes. The pale multitude rises and circles and descends and rises again to and from the solitary water. They are the souls of them who have loved nothing overmuch, who have lived on one another's breath and have floated hither and thither about another's business. They must keep together. They are drawn to the waste pool among the dunes as in life they were drawn to nothing, and a footstep drives them away, to return inevitably again. They desire only not to be alone. I recognise many, and not one of them is strange. They never change. As they are to-day, they were when the maiden's tower was overwhelmed, and will be so long as there is water in the pool and safety and solitude around. Old men and young men and maidens, generation after generation, are indistinguishable in their grey and white plumage and wandering cries. They

suffer a contentment that is not happiness. Their pale wings all together are beautiful. If they were not haunted by the living they might even be happy also, and float upon the water until they were weary, and then upon the wind until the water once more seemed better than the wind.

A few of them are still drifting overhead like larger snowflakes as I dip into the next valley, but in the next I am alone again among the sand-hills, listening to the two gentle dissolving murmurs of the gliding sand and the kissing flakes, sounds that are taking possession of all things as of me, so that in all the drowsy world there seems nothing but the formless mazy snowfall and the vague changing dunes; and then, crossing a stream that flows among alders, in the fields between the dunes and the mountains, I find that I am upon a footpath hidden before but now revealed by the light snow lying close and pure white on the short grass or bare earth of its winding course. The water is full of yellow reeds, the catkins on the dark alders are blood-red, the fields are very green, and the life in their longer grass has all but melted the snow. Already the light is fading from grass and reed and tree, and from the robin who, a moment ago, swelled an orange breast as he sang in the alder. He sings no longer, but flits from the tree to the low stone wall of a garden that follows several loops of the stream. Between the water and the wall creeps the path, and on this path the robin suddenly appeared, visible not in his flight but at the moment when he fluttered before alighting. When he stands still I can hardly see him, and his black eye and hard ejaculated chirp emerges out of the dark air. But he seldom stands still. He flits ahead a few steps, or to one side, or to the wall, and from there to a branch, and back again, very suddenly and unexpectedly. He is more like the embodiment of a thought than a bird—coming thus out of darkness, announcing himself and disappearing again—a thought that is out of control and is living its own life, moving to some end which you cannot foresee though you may dread. Now I have eyes and ears only for this brown, shadowy, uncertainly moving thought that is one moment so still, another flickering, like a flame or a dead leaf. I watch for his movements, yet each one startles me. He enters a garden—the gate has rotted from its hinge—and I follow up a straight weedy path between thickets that were once vegetable plots; flowers of snow hang on the skeleton plants. Five stone steps lead up to a narrow door in a porch, with a window above it. On either side there are three windows one above the other in the old white wall, and on one side the

dairy and sheds adjoin the house. The roof is thatched, and the porch and room above it have a roof of their own. A low stone chimney rises above the thatch at either end. I know that I have seen or known it before this twilight.

House and garden are haunted. They are haunted by something quiet and small—by the robin and his gusty flight —by my thought—haunted by myself. I am the ghost in that snowy garden path outside the house, and my thought wanders helplessly about and around it like the white birds over the pool.

The house has never been unfamiliar to me. Since childhood it has been as clearly in my mind's eye—the seven windows, the door and the five steps, the garden on either side of the straight path up to the porch—as any house which my eyes have seen and my feet entered. Seven windows, seven eyeless sockets where there had been eyes.

A little time ago, ninety years, when the birds were flying up and down over the dunes, a bridegroom and bride had come home to that dark door on an evening of February. Ninety years ago the robin ceased singing and flickered about the path, and up the path towards the newly painted white house with bridegroom and bride. Ninety years ago a thought haunted them as now I am haunting the silent house ; it may have been the same thought. The difference between the living and the dead is little at such times ; there may be no real difference. My uncontrolled thought, born without any wish of mine, is chirping and flitting there on the path, or is gathered up into the twilight gusts in which sea-birds are wailing. At the top of the steps a man pauses, a tall pale man, black-haired, copper-bearded, dressed as a farmer should be who has just been married and has ridden home with his bride ; he turns and looks over the dunes and then to the mountains above the curve of the bay, with a look as of one to whom the scene is familiar and yet foreign ; that he was not born between the mountains and the dunes, and has not spent his childhood there, is clear from his uncomprehending and restless eyes. The small fair-haired woman at his side, well wrapped against the snow, looks so happy and at ease while taking the same brief slow glance that it might easily be known she is not so blessed by her marriage but that she is glad of a further blessing from this native coast. The wheeling birds complete her sense of the beauty of the day and the hour, the mountains, the dunes, and the sea, while they carry her husband's thought away, so that for a moment he is lost, lingering after she has passed into the house and not seeing the robin on the step below, my ghost in the path.

Having looked long, too long, he follows his bride through the dark door. No light appears, and when he has gone I can no longer see the robin and hear only the shivering of the seedless dead stalks in the garden. My thought has gone in after those two. I stare at the windows behind which it has followed them. The door is closed. My thought is pleading with them, troubling them, as the robin, so restless and quick and then suddenly still, troubled me. It is troubling them, this little thought of the unborn, of one who is to come after them, when they are in their graves. Can they in that solitary house foresee anything from the wheeling of the birds, the mazy fall of the snow, the rustling grass, the flickering flight and talk of the robin at the gate? A window is lit up and I see them seated together—he with bowed head watching her hands, which he is holding in his own over his knees; she looking straight out towards where I stand. She is silent while he speaks. He is reminding her that the farm is now his for ever, that they are not now any more just two persons content with one another, but two in the perhaps endless chain of destiny. He foresees the day when the land will be improved and a new house built to take the place of the old farmstead that belongs to the old times, the old ways now passing; he is almost ashamed to bring her to the old place, but he will give up wandering now, he will be able to save, and their children will be better off than they are now, and their children's children. . . . He is talking to himself a moment. Then he says he half wishes he had taken her to his own land. He can never be quite at peace with all these barren sands at the edge of the land, and all those useless birds roving about the sand and the sky. Hark! They will not end their clamour. He takes down his gun from over the fire and goes out, and stepping swiftly over the dunes reaches the pool and fires into the multitude. They scream as if the firmament had a myriad voices and all of misery. They wheel about him as if they would lift him up in their anguished rush. The air is of wings. And in the house she hides her eyes from nothing, and waits. She smiles at his return. He drops a white bird into her lap and she smiles no more; not yet does she reproach him, though she will not look at him, while she tells him the tradition among her father's people—that those birds are the spirits of the men and women who were buried in the sand hundreds of years ago. She says that she can think of nothing sweeter than to hover as a spirit over the pool near where she was born, and where perhaps her children will be keeping sheep and ploughing the good land and cutting fern

from the mountain and gathering whinberries, for ever. She takes up the bird in her two hands, setting free her wrists from his, and says that some day, who knows, she will be like that and so will her children and children's children, flying and floating about their native land and ocean. She wipes the crimson from the white breast with her handkerchief. But he says that he will never be one of the long-winged homeless creatures that threaten to alarm their embrace, but rather a robin that likes men and the houses of men.—"Do not sigh, my wild, beautiful, white and crimson bird." Is that the robin still loitering outside the window, he wonders. He rises and presses his face against the pane and sees me not. He is troubled by the white wings in his mistress's lap and the calling of its companions. He draws the curtains close over the window and shuts out all that he can of the haunting night, the soft-fingered snow, and me, and whatever in that altogether white world might prey upon those two even in their sleep.

Goose Fair

By D. H. Lawrence

I

THROUGH the gloom of evening, through the flaring torches of the night before the fair, through the still fogs of the succeeding dawn came paddling the weary geese, lifting their poor feet that had been dipped in tar for shoon and trailing them along the cobble-stones into the town. Last of all, in the afternoon, a country girl drove in her dozen birds, disconsolate because she was so late. She was a heavily built girl, fair, with regular features, and yet unprepossessing. She needed chiselling down, her contours were brutal. Perhaps it was weariness that hung her eyelids a little lower than was pleasant to see. When she spoke to her clumsily lagging birds it was in a snarling nasal tone, very disagreeable. One of the silly things sat down in the gutter and refused to move. It looked very ridiculous, but also rather pitiful, squat there with its head up, refusing to be urged on by the ungentle toe of the girl. The latter swore fiercely, then picked up the great complaining bird, and looking round to see if any one had heard her, drove on the lamentable eleven.

No one had heard her. The women were not sitting chatting on their doorsteps, seaming up the cotton hose, or swiftly passing through their fingers the piled white lace, and in the high dark houses the song of the hosiery frames was hushed: "Shackety-boom, Shackety-shackety-boom Z—zzz!" As she dragged up Hollow Stone, people returning from the fair chaffed her and asked her what o'clock it was. She did not reply, but her look was dangerous. The Lace Market was quiet as the Sabbath: even the great brass plates on the doors were dull with neglect. There seemed an afternoon atmosphere of raw discontent. The girl stopped a moment before the dismal prospect of one of the great warehouses that had been gutted with fire. She looked at the lean threatening walls, and watched her white flock waddling in reckless misery below, and she would have laughed out loud had the wall fallen flat upon

them and relieved her of them. But the wall did not fall, so she crossed the road, and walking on the safe side, hurried after her charge. Her look was even more sullen. She remembered the state of trade—Trade, the invidious enemy; Trade which thrust out its hand and shut the factory doors, and pulled the stockingers off their seats, and left the web half-finished on the frame; Trade, which mysteriously choked up the mysterious sources of the rivulets of wealth, and blacker and more secret than a pestilence, starved the town. Through this morose atmosphere of bad trade, in the afternoon of the first day of the fair, the girl strode down to the Poultry with eleven sound geese and one lame one to sell.

The idiotic little Frenchmen were at the bottom of it! So everybody said, but nobody quite knew how. At any rate, they had gone to war with the Prussians and got beaten, as they deserved, the mountebanks, ruining trade!

A little fog rose up, and the twilight gathered around. Then they flared abroad their torches in the fair, insulting the night. The girl still sat in the Poultry, and her weary geese unsold on the cold stones, illuminated by the hissing lamp of a man who sold rabbits and pigeons and such-like assorted livestock.

II

In another part of the town, near Sneinton Church, another girl came to the door to look at the night. She was tall and slender, dressed with the severe accuracy which marks the girl of superior culture. Her hair was arranged with simplicity about the long, pale, cleanly-cut face. She leaned forward very slightly to glance down the street, listening. She very carefully preserved the appearance of having come quite casually to the door, yet she lingered and lingered and stood very still to listen when she heard a footstep, but when it proved to be only a common man, she drew herself up proudly and looked with a small smile over his head. He hesitated to glance into the open hall, lighted so splendidly with a scarlet-shaded lamp, and at the slim girl in brown silk lifted up to advantage before the light. But she, she looked over his head. He passed on.

Presently she started and hung in suspense. Somebody was crossing the road. She ran down the steps in a pretty agitation, not effuse, saying in quick but accurately articulated words: "Will! I began to think you'd gone to the fair. Listen! you can hear it so far—what do they find to enjoy in that commotion! I'm glad you've come to dinner," she

shrugged her shoulders slightly, "the place is as dreary as an empty church, and the bray of the fair makes one more disconsolate. But do come in."

The man, who had a short face and who spoke with his lip curling up on one side, and who had a drawling speech with ironically exaggerated intonation, replied:

"I'm awfully sorry, I am, straight, Lois. It's an infernal shame. I've got to go round to the biz. Man proposes—else woman—and it's generally the devil disposes." He turned aside with irony to smile to himself in the darkness, and add "else man."

"But surely, Will!" remonstrated the girl, keenly disappointed.

"Fact, Lois!—and I do feel wild. But I've got to go down to the works. They may be getting a bit warm down there, you know"—he jerked his head in the direction of the fair—"and if the Lambs get frisky!—well, you know they're a bit off about the work, and there have been fires lately——"

"Will, you don't think——!" exclaimed the girl, laying her hand on his arm in the true fashion of romance, and looking up at him earnestly.

"Dad's had rumours," he replied, looking down at her with gravity. They remained in this suspended attitude for a moment, then he said:

"I've a good mind not to go, Lois. I'll stop with you."

"No, Will!" She drew herself erect, and spoke with decision. "No, Will, you must go."

"What a shame!" he murmured, taking her in his arms and kissing her.

She let him keep her for a moment, then she kissed him in return and disengaged him, saying, with the air of a woman who sends her lover to duty and to death, "Go now."

"Good night!" he said, tearing himself away. "Good night!" He hurried down the street. She listened to his footsteps echoing away, then stilling her sighs, and composing herself, she turned indoors.

"Helloa!" said her father, glancing over his paper as she entered the dining-room. "What's up, miss?"

"Oh, nothing," she replied, in her crisp, calm tones. "Will won't be here to dinner to-night."

"Not likely, fair night."

"Oh! the fair makes no difference."

"Oh! Where is he frying his fish, then?"

Lois looked at her father sternly, and answered:

"He's gone down to watch at the factory. There is a rumour of incendiary."

Her father quickly put up the newspaper before his face.

III

Lois retired very early. She had a fire in her bedroom. She drew the curtains and stood holding aside a heavy fold, looking out at the night. She could see only the nothingness of the fog: not even the glare of the fair was evident, though the noise clamoured small in the distance. In front of everything she could see her own faint image. She crossed to the dressing-table, and there leaned her face to the mirror, and looked at herelf. She looked a long time, then very sadly she rose, changed her dress for a dressing-jacket, and took up "Sesame and Lilies."

Late in the night she was roused from sleep by a bustle in the house. She sat up and heard a hurrying to and fro and the sound of anxious voices. She put on her dressing-gown and went out to her mother's room. Seeing her at the head of the stairs, she said in her quick, clean voice:

"Mother, what is it?"

"Oh, child, don't ask me! Go to bed, dear, do! I shall surely be worried out of my life."

"Mother, what is it?" Lois was sharp and emphatic.

"I hope your father won't go. Now I do hope your father won't go. He's got a cold as it is."

"Mother, tell me what it is." Lois imperiously took her mother's arm.

"It's Selby's. I should have thought you would have heard the fire-engine, and Jack isn't in yet. I hope we're safe!" Lois returned to her bedroom and dressed. She coiled her plaited hair, and having put on a cloak, slipped out of the house. To say she slipped out of the house is to insult her. She left the house.

She hurried along under the fog-dripping trees towards the meaner part of the town. When she got near, she saw a glare in the fog, and closed her lips tight. She hastened on till she was in the crowd. With dreadful, peaked, despairing face she watched the fire. Then she looked a little wildly over the fire-reddened faces in the crowd, and catching sight of her father hurried to him.

"Oh, dadda—is he safe? Tell me he's safe."

"Safe, ay, he's safe enough. You've no business here.

Here, here's Sampson, he'll take you home. I've enough to think about; there's my own place to watch. Him safe! he's safe, you may bet your life on that."

"Why do you speak like that, dadda?" she asked coldly.

"Go home—Sampson, just take Miss Lois home—now! Run along child!"

"You don't for one moment suspect that he—he——Father!"

"Go on, child, go on. Your mother will be having heart attacks and what not. Do go, little woman."

The tears sprang to Lois' eyes. She looked at the fire and the tears were quickly dried by the heat. The flames roared and struggled upward. The great wonder of the fire made her forget even her indignant grief at the suspicions which her father had thrown on her lover. There was a crashing and bursting of timber, as the first floor fell in a mass into the great blazing gulf, splashing the fire in all directions, to the terror of the crowd. She saw the steel of the machines growing white hot and twisting like flaming letters in a dreadful message. Piece after piece of the flooring gave way, and the machines dropped in red ruin as the wooden framework burned away. The air became unbreathable; the fog was swallowed up; sparks went rushing up as if they would burn the dark heavens; sometimes cards of lace went whirling into the gulf of the sky, waving with wings of fire. It was dangerous to stand near this great cup of roaring destruction.

Sampson, the grey old manager of Suxton and Co's, led her away as soon as she would turn her face to listen to him. He was a stout, irritable man. He elbowed his way roughly through the crowd, and Lois followed him, her head high, her lips closed proudly. He led her for some distance without speaking, then at last, unable to contain his garrulous irritability, he broke out:

"What do they expect? What can they expect? They can't expect to stand a bad time. They spring up like mushrooms as big as a house side, but there's no stability in 'em. I remember William Selby when he'd run on my errands. Yes, there's some as can make much out of little, and there's some as can make much out of nothing, but they find their mistake out. There's no need to hurry, Miss Lois—I'm not as young as I was. I can remember the time when you'd hang on my finger and run when I walked slow. But things are altered, things are altered. But I shouldn't like to come to such a pass as William Selby. I shouldn't indeed. No, indeed, a fire's the last thing I should hope to come to—the very last!"

Lois hurried and hurried, so that she brought the old manager panting in distress up the steps of her home. They could get no one to open the door for some time. When at last Lois ran upstairs, she found her mother dressed, but all unbuttoned again, lying back in the chair in her daughter's room, suffering from palpitation of the heart, with "Sesame and Lilies" crushed beneath her. Lois administered brandy, and her decisive words and movements helped largely to bring the good lady to a state of recovery sufficient to allow of her returning to her own bedroom.

Then Lois locked the door. She glanced at her fire-darkened face, and taking the flattened Ruskin out of the chair, sat down and wept. After a while she calmed herself, rose, and sponged her face. Then once more on that fatal night she prepared for rest. Instead, however, of retiring, she pulled a silk quilt from her disordered bed and, wrapping it round her, sat miserably to think. It was two o'clock in the morning.

IV

The fire was sunk to cold ashes in the grate, and the grey morning was creeping through the half-opened curtains like a thing ashamed when Lois awoke. It was painful to move her head: her neck was cramped. The girl awoke in full recollection. She sighed, roused herself and pulled the quilt closer about her. For a little while she sat and mused. A pale, tragic resignation fixed her face like a mask. She alone suspected the dreadful truth, and the tragedy of it, and her own proud isolation in the knowledge sustained her. Will was burned, was lost in the factory. Who knew that there had not been some foul play which had left him perhaps murdered, perhaps stunned or wounded, the victim of infuriated workmen, to be consumed in the fire. The grandeur of the tragedy alone sustained the girl. When she had fought out her conclusions and taken her attitude of dignity and silence, like some great tragedienne, she listened to the sounds in the house. She could hear her father walking downstairs, calling to one of the servant-maids.

It was dawn among the yellow fog outside, and Lois, as she moved mechanically about her toilet, vaguely felt that all her days would arrive slowly struggling through a bleak fog. She felt an intense longing at this uncanny hour to slough the body's trammelled weariness and to issue at once into the new bright warmth of the far Dawn where her lover had just awakened transfigured; for who has not stepped in imagination out of the

chill grey dampness of another terrestrial daybreak, straight into the sunshine of the eternal morning? And who can escape his hour? So Lois performed the meaningless routine of her toilet, which at last she made meaningful when she took her black dress, and fastened a black jet brooch at her throat.

Then she went downstairs and found her father in the study eating a mutton chop. She quickly approached and kissed him on the forehead, lest he should rise to salute her, his moustache greasy. Then she retreated to the other end of the table. Her father looked tired, even haggard.

"You are early, little girl," he said, after a while. Lois did not reply. Her father continued to eat for a few moments, then he said:

"Come and have a chop—look, here's a nice one! Ring for a hot plate. Eh, what? Ah, you may as well eat, you've got to sooner or later."

Lois was insulted, but she gave no sign. She sat down and took a cup of coffee, making no pretence to eat. Her father glanced at her from time to time with the pale, nervous, baffled glance of a man who despises the source of grief, and who knows he can give no comfort.

"And our Jack's not come home yet," he said at last.

Lois stirred faintly. "Hasn't he?" she said.

"No, the young scamp. He's been up to something, I know." There was a silence for a time. They drew inevitably nearer the subject.

"Selby's was cleaned out, gutted. I thought we should have gone too, by Jove I did."

"You have no loss, dadda?"

"Well, nothing to mention, nothing in comparison." After another silence, her father said:

"It's an awful thing for William Selby, whether he meant it or not. You should have seen him, he was fair struck down, fairly shrunken, like any common man. And he talked like a common man too—quite broad. By Jove! And not a word about his son, not a word, poor beggar!"

"Father," broke in Lois, "don't! You may regret more than you know, your hateful suspicions—baseless——" She ended suddenly. Her father bent his face to his plate and said nothing. After a while Lois rose and left the room. Her father sighed, and leaning his elbows on his knees whistled faintly into the fire.

Lois went down to the kitchen and asked Lucy, the parlour-maid, to go out with her. She somehow shrank from going

alone, lest people should stare at her overmuch: and she felt an overpowering impulse to go to the scene of the tragedy.

The churches were chiming half-past eight when the young lady and the maid set off down the street. Nearer the fair, swarthy, thin-legged men were pushing barrels of water towards the market place, and the gipsy women, with hard brows, and dressed in tight velvet bodices, hurried along the pavement with jugs of milk, and great brass water ewers and loaves and breakfast parcels. People were just getting up, and in the poorer streets was a continual splash of tea-leaves, flung out on to the cobble-stones. A teapot came crashing down from an upper story just behind Lois, and she, starting round and looking up, thought that the trembling drink-bleared man at the upper window, who was stupidly staring after his pot, had had designs on her life, seeing her so well circumstanced; and she went on her way accepting the grim tragedy of life.

In the dull October morning the ruined factory was black and ghastly. The window-frames were all jagged, and the walls stood gaunt. Inside was a tangle of twisted *débris*, the iron, in parts red with bright rust, looking still hot; the charred wood was black and satiny; from dishevelled heaps, soddened with water, a faint smoke rose dimly. Lois stood and looked. If he were lost in there—ah, how inevitably were all traces vanished! She would say nothing: she alone would know: the innermost tragedy would rest immune with her.

At her side the pretty, sympathetic maid chatted plaintively. Suddenly, from one of her lapses into silence, she exclaimed:

"Why, if there isn't Mr. Jack!"

Lois turned suddenly and saw her brother and her lover approaching her. Both looked soiled, untidy and wan. Will had a black eye, some ten hours old, well coloured. Lois turned very pale as they approached. They were looking gloomily at the factory, and for a moment did not notice the girls.

"I'll be jiggered if there ain't our Lois!" exclaimed Jack, the reprobate, swearing under his breath.

"Oh, Lord!" groaned the other as his cup overflowed.

"Jack, where have you been?" said Lois sharply, in keen pain, not looking at her lover. Her sharp tone of suffering drove her lover to defend himself with an affectation of comic recklessness.

"In quod," he replied, smiling sickly.

"Jack!" cried his sister very sharply.

"Fact—ask Billy."

The latter, however, only shuffled on his feet, trying to turn

away his face so that she should not see his black eye. She glanced at him. He felt her boundless anger and contempt, and with great courage he looked straight at her, smiling. Unfortunately his smile would not go over his swollen eye, which remained grave and lurid.

"Is it a very bad one?" he inquired whimsically.

"What?" she inquired, very short and cold.

"My eye"—his lip curled up on one side just as ever.

She looked at him, withered him, then turned to her brother: "And what have you been doing?"

The young man glanced at his friend, and struggling against the horrid strain and discord of the situation, began to laugh.

"It was a lark though! The fun was a bit slow when we got down to the fair. We managed to pick up Bob Osborne and Freddy Mansell and one or two others, and then there was a girl with some geese. She looked like the missis of a tiger show, and they all sat like statues, her and the geese. It was Will here who began it. He wanted to pretend they were performing geese, an' he gave the girl—she was a very Zulu—he gave her threepence and asked her to begin the show. She called him a—well she called him something, and then somebody poked an old gander to stir him up, and somebody squirted him in the eye. He upped and squawked and came at us with his neck out. Laugh! We nearly killed ourselves, keeping off those old birds with squirts and teasers. Oh, Lum! There was quite a gang of us, an' the girl set an' laughed like a fiend. Those old geese, oh, scrimmy, they didn't know where to turn, they fairly went off their dots, coming at us right an' left, and such a row—Oh, Cæsar!—it was fun, you never knew—wasn't it though, Will? The girl she got up and knocked somebody over the jaw, but she enjoyed it, you may bet. Well, in the end, Billy here got hold of her round the waist——"

"Oh, dry it up!" exclaimed Will.

Jack looked at him, laughed, and continued: "An' we got hold of one goose apiece—an' they did take some holding, I can tell you—and off we set round the fair, Billy leading with the girl. The bloomin' geese squawked an' pecked everybody they could come in reach of. Laugh!—I thought I should a' died—you should a' heard the things they said. Well, they began to get mad, the folks, an' then my goose went an' pecked Billy's girl on the neck, an' he laughed like anything. It made her mad when he laughed. Then he held her for it to get her again, and she swung round in such a tear, and landed him a black eye.

Then there was a free fight, a beauty, an' we got run in. I don't know what became of the girl."

Lois surveyed the two men. There was no glimmer of a smile on her face, though the maid behind her was sniggering. Will also was very serious. He glanced at his sweetheart and at the ruined factory.

"How's dad taken it?" he asked dejectedly, signifying the burnt place, and addressing his Lois humbly.

"As you might think," she replied coldly, "he's in an awful way. And you—you don't know what you've cost him this night. He's broken his heart, that's all. Everybody thinks you set the place on fire and then cleared off."

Lois drew herself up. She had delivered her blow: her feelings had moved her even to slang: but she had triumphed. She drew herself up, looked down on him in cold condemnation, and for a moment enjoyed her complete revenge. He was utterly cast down, very abject in his dishevelled, disfigured, unwashed condition, perhaps even a little pitiful in his forlorn misery.

"Shall I go and tell him?" said Lois relenting. Her lover glanced at her and their looks met for a moment, then he turned quickly away, feeling the tears pressing in his throat and eyes.

"You will come along," she said as she left them, and there was a slight comfort in her tone. "Lucy, will you go home and say I have just called on Mr. Selby?"

The Love Child

A PLAY IN ONE ACT*

By Frederick Fenn and Richard Pryce

CHARACTERS

Mrs. Peacemeal.		Albert.
Liz.		Bessie Ling.
Maud.	Alf.	Nance Hablot.

SCENE: Living-room (on an upper floor) at Mrs. Peacemeal's. Mrs. Peacemeal, *a tired, overworked woman, prematurely old, has been washing. The room is steamy. Clothes are hanging on a line. There is a table at the back, under a window which looks on to the road, and beside the table—between it and the door—is a chair. A fireplace is on the right: an open kitchen range. There is a cradle beside the hearth.*

At another table before the fire Alf *and* Maud *are having supper: bloaters and beer.* Mrs. Peacemeal *is ironing with her back to the audience at the table under window. A cup of tea (no saucer) stands upon the ironing-board beside her, and a slice of bread and butter with something which might be meat on it.* Albert, *a small boy of six or seven, is standing on a chair by the table, looking out of the window. The window is shut. An organ in the far distance is playing, and the air, "Baby, Baby," is heard very, very faintly. Whenever the window is open sounds of the street wash in, like waves into a creek.*

Alf *is a sturdy young fellow of two or three and twenty. He slouches and is short in his manner, but is well-conditioned on the whole.*

Maud *is eighteen or so, sharp, shrewd, alert. Her hair (screwed tightly) is in curling-pins.*

Alf. Seen Liz? [*He pours some beer out of the jug and drinks.*

Maud. No.

Alf. Well, first come, first served. [*Cuts some more bread, helps himself to bloater.*] Soft! Blast it.

Maud. Oh, you always get well served.

Alf. Do I? 'Ere what 'a' you got to say about it, eh? Look at y'r own plate. I wondered what you was in such a 'urry to 'elp y'rself 'fore I sat down. I've 'alf a mind——

* First produced under the title of *Liz's Baby* by Mrs. Patrick Campbell, April 15, 1901. Revived by Mr. William Morris at the Waldorf Theatre, September 10, 1906.

MAUD. Oh, chuck it. You make my 'ead ache. I'm sure I never noticed whether they was 'ard nor yet soft.

ALF [*sarcastically*]. No. I dare say not.

MAUD. And I ain't so partickler as what some people are.

ALF. Oh, all right. That'll do. 'S no need to make a song about it.

MAUD. Very well then.

ALF. Very well then.

MAUD. Besides *Liz* could 'a 'ad that one if she didn't choose to be in. She likes a softy. I s'pose 'cause she such a bloomin' softy 'erself.

ALF. You let Liz alone.

ALBERT [*from the window*]. Ain't y' goin' out to-night, Alf ?

ALF. Yes, d'reckly.

MAUD. Seen father ?

ALF. No. [*To* MRS. PEACEMEAL.] Don't you want no supper, mother ? Gives anybody the fair 'ump to see you goin' on with that blessed ironin' all day.

MRS. PEACEMEAL *holds an iron to her face for a minute, then puts it down and takes a bite at the slice of bread and butter, and then, picking up another iron, holds it in turn to her face, and goes on working as before.*

ALF. Supper! Lord save us! Supper! [*He looks to see if there is any more beer but finds there is not.*] Mind je, I don't want to say nothing, but whoever fetched the beer to-night must 'a chucked a bit off the top comin' round the corner.

MAUD. Well, I fetched it and I didn't chuck it. See ? Face!

ALF. We ain't takin' none o' yor lip to-night.

ALBERT. Ain't y' nearly done supper ?

MAUD. It's like a giddy fune-ral to come 'ome now.

ALF. Oh shut ch'ead.

MAUD. Well, ain't it! Father's gone to the club. He got 'is shirt out fair to-day, and says Liz's got to go, *and* the kid, unless she brings in something. He says it's quite enough to brought *us* up respectable, 'e says, without another baby, 'e says, let alone another mouth to feed, and 'e ain't a-goin' to run a blimy baby farm.

ALF. Oh, shut it.

MAUD. Shut it y'self. He went on something crool and Liz went out cryin' awful.

ALBERT [*from the window*]. Ain't Liz comin' in to 'ave supper ?

ALF [*reasonably*]. What's the good o' 'im jawin' about it. Jaw, jaw, jaw! Makes me tired. Won't they take her on again ?

MAUD. No.

ALF. Can't she go 'long o' you ?

MAUD. No. We're full, juggins! They sent away thirty this week. I'm only kep' on meself because Jim Tarver said I was the smartest girl they'd got. No. Liz'll 'ave to sling unless she do git something pretty sharp. You know what father is.

ALF. She's as good a 'and as what you are any day of the week, I'll lay.

MAUD. That may be, but there ain't room for 'er not in my shop. Besides, I got no incrumbrance, I 'aven't. And anyway they're full up. Why, Em Trubeck, she got the kick yes'd'y, and she'd been there three

years and thought herself safe because the guv'nor 'd took 'er out once and again—so she said—but I expect 'e was glad of the excuse. She's a treat, Em is, I *don't* think—give 'er 'er 'ead a bit.

ALF. Well, mind y' don't shove yo'rs in the same boat.

MAUD. No fear! Jim Tarver's all right with me.

ALF. Well, if yo're so bloomin' thick with 'im, why don't y' make 'im take on Liz?

MAUD. Not likely—after all o' them knowin'. I've got meself to think about.

ALF. Aw right—let ch' sister go out and starve.

ALBERT [*from the window*]. Liz's been cryin'. I see her cryin' this after-dinner-time. Ain't Liz comin' in soon?

MAUD. Liz ain't such a fool as she can't pick up somethink or the other, even if she ain't respectable now.

ALF [*rising from the table and beginning to lace his boots, which are not fastened*]. Not so much of y'r "not respectable." If you don't watch it, you won't be any more respectable than what Liz is d'reckly.

MAUD [*looking at cradle*]. Well, I call 'er a fat-'ead not to 'a' made 'im marry 'er. It ain't as if we could afford that sort o' game.

ALF. 'E couldn't marry two girls, could 'e, silly?

MAUD. Why, Bill 'Ablot 'e got round Liz 'fore ever 'e thought of Nance. Carryin' on with both of 'em, wasn't 'e? 'E didn't want to marry Nance, did 'e? Course 'e didn't, but Nance she knows a thing or two. She ain't a softy like our Liz. She sized him up pretty quick and never let him go till she'd run 'im into church. Bill did look a mug when 'e come out on 'er arm. But Nance she didn't care. She'd got 'im right enough.

ALF. Well, it's a blasted shame—that's what I call it.

MAUD. Liz shouldn't 'a' been such a silly.

ALF. She ain't the only silly. If you was 'alf as pretty as Liz you'd 'a' been twice as silly.

ALBERT [*at the window*]. Ain't y' goin' to open the window, muvver?

MRS. PEACEMEAL *opens the window and Albert climbs up on to the sill and leans out.* MRS. PEACEMEAL *looks down into the street for a moment mechanically over his head, and then turning comes down to the fire and changes the irons standing in front of it. She pauses at the cradle, and then giving it a gentle push with her foot, goes back with a sigh to her ironing.* ALF *and* MAUD *have stopped their wrangling and look sheepishly at the sleeping child. Confused sounds come in from the street.*

ALBERT [*kicking his legs*]. Oh, I say. There's 'Arry Smif punsin' Willy Mason's 'ead. Oh [*shouting*], no, Willy Mason didn't 'it you first. [*He turns excitedly to the room.*] 'E didn't. I see 'Arry catch 'im one side of the 'ead. Oh, 'ere's Willy Mason's muvver. Ain't y' comin' to look, Alf?

ALF [*growls*]. No. You'll fall out and 'urt yourself next. Shut that winder.

ALBERT *does not heed, but leans out further, kicking his legs against the wall. The organ is nearer and has come round again to "Baby," which strikes up suddenly. Some girls are heard to*

go by under the window dragging their feet along the pavement as they sing in unison:

"*Baby, Baby, close your prety blue eyes,*
Angels, Angels, watch you from the skies my darling,
Baby, Baby, slumbers o'er you creep,
Hushaby, Hushaby, Baby has gone to sleep."

There is a scream of laughter from below. MAUD *starts forward.*

MAUD. That's the woodshed girls—Jane Peckover and that gang. That's who it is. Like their cheek comin' round 'ere singin' that. Saucy cattle.

ALF. Shut that winder. D'y' 'ear. [*To* MAUD.] Easy. Shut that winder down, mother.

MRS. PEACEMEAL *pulls* ALBERT *in and shuts down the window.*

MAUD. See what she's brought on the fam'ly. Nice state of things. All through not 'avin' the sense to get 'im to church. I jolly well know I would.

ALF. Oh, you would, would y' ? [*He draws the lace of his second boot to a knot and turns down his trousers.*] H'm, it ain't everybody as fancies yeller 'air and freckles.

MAUD [*unappeased*]. Well, yeller 'air and freckles mayn't be as fancy as all that—mind je I don't say they are—but there's plenty as ain't so fond of black 'air neither—all over y' face [*she puts on her coat savagely and takes up a bundle of slop-made trousers*], and eyes like a sweep's and none too much character and a squallin' kid. [*She goes to the door.*

ALF [*good-humouredly*]. There ain't no tellin'. Where are y' goin' ?

MAUD. I'm jes' going for a stroll to look in the shop windows, and I thought it'd be more pleasant like to 'ave these with me.

ALF. Oh, did y' now ! Well, after y' been round to Lewison's, where y' goin' then ?

MAUD. Open the door.

ALF. Where y' goin' then ?

MAUD. Out, I tell y'.

ALBERT. Ain't you goin' to take me with y' ?

MAUD. No. [*To* ALF, *who is at the door.*] Open the door, can't y' ? You can see I got me 'ans full.

ALF [*opening door and giving her a friendly push*]. Well, git out and mindge company.

He laughs, lights a pipe and comes down. A basket of newly ironed clothes lies on the ground where his mother has placed it. He looks from it to her. She is working on wearily and methodically. He shuffles about for a moment.

ALF. I'm going round to the club—to tell father Jakes wants to see him. [*The sight of his mother working patiently irritates him.*] What do you want to go and do other people's washing for as well as y'r own, that's what I want to know. [*He kicks the clothes-basket.*] There [*gently*] I'll take 'em when I come in, see ? I'll be back d'reckly.

MRS. PEACEMEAL *nods and sprinkles the linen.*

ALBERT. Muvver.

MRS. PEACEMEAL *looks towards him without speaking.*

ALBERT. If Liz don't come in can I 'ave 'er bloater ?

The door opens and Liz *enters. She looks draggled, miserable, tired. She glances quickly towards the cradle, but the child is quiet, and she takes off her hat, which she hangs upon a hook. She is seen then to be wan and big-eyed, but a pretty girl with a mane of heavy dark hair.*

Albert [*thinking of the bloater*]. 'Ave y' 'ad y' supper, Liz ?

Alf [*to* Liz]. Got anything ?

Liz [*sullenly*]. No. They're all slackin' off. They don't want new 'ands.

Alf. Oh, well, better luck to-morrow, I d'say. [*Strokes his hat.*] Buck up a bit and sauce 'em like Maud, that's the way. Well, I'm off. [*To his mother.*] I'll take the basket. I'll be back directly. [*He goes out.*

Albert. I seed you when you went out. You was cryin'. What was you cryin' for ?

Liz. Oh, shut your row.

She takes off her coat and goin gto the cradle looks at the sleeping child for a moment or two without smiling. She pushes the cradle gently with her foot, as her mother has done, to make it rock and then goes to the table and surveys the remains of supper.

Liz [*gently*]. 'Ave you 'ad supper, mother ?

Mrs. Peacemeal *puts down the iron, thinks a minute, and then taking up the cup beside her, "drains" it, and placing it on the plate which is now empty, pushes plate and cup on one side.*

Liz [*looking at* Maud *and* Alf's *places*]. They couldn't wait o' course, selfish beasts. [*She looks into beer-jug and finds it empty.*

Mrs. Peacemeal *jerks her head in the direction of the grate.* Liz *goes to the oven and brings thence a plate with a herring on it. She sits down at table and begins to eat, snuffling ; eating and crying at intervals but evidently enjoying her food.* Mrs. Peacemeal *takes clothes down from line, sprinkles them and goes on ironing.* Liz *goes to the fire and pours some tea into a cup from a tea-pot on the hob. She drinks the tea off and goes on eating her supper. She kneels for a moment by the cradle.*

Liz. 'E do sleep. I suppose 'e ain't been much trouble while I was out. [*She crosses to* Mrs. Peacemeal, *taking the remains of her supper to the ironing-board.*] 'Ere, I'll finish them while you sit down a bit. [*She takes the iron from* Mrs. Peacemeal, *spits on it lightly to see how hot it is and begins to work.*

Mrs. Peacemeal, *relieved, seems at a loose end. She comes down wearily and begins putting things together on the supper-table.*

Liz. I'll clear up them d'reckly. Don't you worry. You go and see how the things are drying in the yard. A breath o' fresh air'll do y' good.

Mrs. Peacemeal *gathers up all the litter of clothes and goes out by door opposite fireplace.*

Albert [*watching*]. Ain't you goin' to finish those muvver was doin' first. Oo look [*he opens window and lets in sounds from the street*], there's Rowsie Iglet tumbled off the railings. [*Cries are heard from outside. The organ has moved nearer and is playing.*] 'Ark, there it is again. [*Sings.*] "Baby, Baby . . ."

LIZ [*slamming down window and boxing* ALBERT'S *ears*]. You sling your 'ook quick, d'y'ear.

ALBERT [*whimpering*]. What's that for?

LIZ. Never mind what that's for. You be off. You go and 'elp mother with the clothes. Quick march! Double time too! Don't let me 'ave to say it again.

She walks ALBERT *across to the door, shaking him as she goes. At the door she takes him suddenly in her arms.*

LIZ. 'Ere, don't cry, Albert. I didn't mean it, dear. Nor yet you didn't mean it, I know that. You don't understand darlin', but I don't know what I'm doin' now 'alf me time. If I'm a cross sister to y', I don't mean it. 'Ere I've got a 'ape'ny in me pocket. There, dear, run away to mother. It's my 'ead aches so's I don't 'ardly know where I am. There dear. Kiss y' cross old sister, my man. That's right. Now I'll get these things done, see? and then I'll come an' play with y', shall I? Run away, there's a dear. [*Exit* ALBERT.

She gives a little sniff and goes back to the irons. She has scarcely done so before there is a knock at the door, which is flung open at the same moment, and BESSIE LING *enters excitedly.*

Bessie is a short, good-hearted girl of a rough and ready kind, and the type which has been finely and finally described as "all mouth and fringe."

BESSIE. Liz. [*Looking round.*] She ain't here!

LIZ. Oo ain't 'ere?

BESSIE [*mysteriously*]. I seen *'er* just now.

LIZ [*stops ironing*]. 'Er?

BESSIE. Bill's wife—Nance 'Ablot.

LIZ. Well. . . . What's that to me! I don't want no truck with 'er. She never was no friend of mine.

BESSIE. She's—she's comin' 'ere.

LIZ. 'Ere!

BESSIE. She is.

LIZ. Garn! They've been gettin' at y'. [*Slaps down an article to iron and resumes work.*] What 'ud she want to come 'ere for, eh?

BESSIE. I dunno. But she is comin'. I thought she'd a been 'ere now and that's why I run. I run all the way from Kennington Lane.

LIZ [*ironing fiercely*]. Well, let 'er come. I don't care. I can give 'er as good as she gives me.

BESSIE [*seeing cradle*]. I say, is 'e asleep?

LIZ. Yes.

BESSIE. Won't wake 'im I s'pose if I look at 'im.

LIZ. You can look as much as y' like.

BESSIE *goes to cradle and leans over it.*

BESSIE. I wonder what it's like to 'ave a kid of your own.

LIZ [*banging down the iron savagely upon the stand*]. This is what it's like. I'm what it's like.

BESSIE. Y' father ain't goin' to turn y'out, is 'e?

LIZ. Better wait and see.

BESSIE. It's a shame. If I could I'd take y' in meself, but there's mother and 'Arry and Will and Charley.

LIZ. All right, ol' gal.

BESSIE. If you could only git some one to take it.

LIZ. Some one to take it? [*Thoughtfully.*] D'ye think I could? I don't know though.

BESSIE. I'd summons 'im. I'd make Bill pay for it if it was me, see if I wouldn't.

LIZ [*savagely*]. Don't you begin.

BESSIE [*is taken aback and does not appear to know what to say. She looks doubtfully at the child again*]. 'E ain't got much 'air, 'as 'e?

LIZ. Did you come burstin' in 'ere to tell me that?

There is a knock at the door.

LIZ. What's that?

BESSIE. It's 'er.

LIZ *stops ironing and thinks.*

BESSIE. She 'as got a face on her comin' 'ere! Shall I open the door?

LIZ *nods and resumes work.* NANCE *enters.*

NANCE *is as much a product of London as the other two, but is more robust and is more of a woman. She is dressed in gaudy mourning. She has a small bundle in her arms and stands rather sullenly inside the door, taking stock of the room and its occupants.*

LIZ [*breaking the silence and without looking at her*]. What d'ye want? We ain't at home to-day except to very partickler friends.

NANCE [*looking at* BESSIE]. I don't want 'er.

BESSIE. Well, if it comes to that, me payin' a visit 'ere to my friend, we wasn't so particularly and anxious on seein' you.

LIZ. There Bessie, be quiet.

BESSIE. Oh, I ain't sayin' nothink.

NANCE [*to* LIZ]. I've got something to say to you—p'tickler.

LIZ [*to* BESSIE]. 'Ook it a bit, d' y' mind.

BESSIE [*to* NANCE]. Oh, I don't want to stop where I'm not wanted. Two's company, I s'pose, even amongst ladies. So long, Lizzie. See y' o' Sund'y? Goo'-bye, dear.

LIZ. Good-bye. [*Exit* BESSIE.

NANCE [*looks round*]. Where's yor kid?

LIZ. Ain't y' own enough?

NANCE. May I see 'im? 'E's a boy, ain't 'e?

LIZ. Yes. [*She looks at the cradle.*

NANCE. Mine was a boy, too.

She goes and looks at the child. She bends over the cradle.

LIZ [*unable to bear the sight*]. 'Ere! Come out of that. Chuck what you've got to say off y'r chest—unless you come 'ere to 'ave tea with the kid.

NANCE *starts and draws back.* LIZ *stands between her and the cradle.*

NANCE [*after a pause*]. D'ye want to see mine?

LIZ. No.

She looks involuntarily.

NANCE *slowly unwinds the shawl and holds out the child to her.*

LIZ [*rather fascinated*]. Ain't 'e white! You oughtn't to took him out a day like this. What a mite! Just like wax.

[NANCE *stands still with a drawn face holding the child rigidly before her.*

LIZ [*touches it shrinkingly*]. Nance! What's the matter? Why he's —he's *dead!* Take it away. Take it away. I don't like it. I'm frightened. Oh, my Gawd. 'Ow did y' do it?

She covers her face with her hands.

NANCE [*dully*]. He died last night—at ar' par' sten (*half-past ten*).

LIZ. Ar' par' sten!

NANCE. On the stroke. Poor little monkey. 'E wasn't in the club either.

LIZ [*recovering from the shock*]. Well, I guess I'm sorry. I never thought to say that about nothink what 'appened to you. I'm sorry, but you won't do no good traipsin' round 'ere with 'im. You'd better go 'ome.

NANCE [*covering the child's face and putting him down*]. I—I didn't come only to show 'im to y'. I jes' thought of it this mornin'. I laid awake all last night. They ain't so much unlike.

LIZ *sniffs.*

NANCE. Yo're goin' to get the chuck cos o' this.

LIZ. 'Ow did you 'ear?

NANCE. It don't matter 'ow I came to 'ear. I did 'ear, that's enough. You'd be better without this wouldn't y'? [*She nods towards cradle.*

LIZ. What d' y' mean?

NANCE. What I say. I don't know if you'll take it kindly. . . . Will y' change?

LIZ *puts down her iron or whatever she has been holding and stares at her blankly.*

LIZ. Change?

NANCE *nods without speaking.*

LIZ. Change! Are you gone clean off y'r 'ead or am I? Change! You're gone dotty, ain't y'!

NANCE. No. But I got a 'ome to stay in, see, and yo're goin' to lose yo'rs. Mother'll always keep me—and she's got a bit saved she 'as. I'm all right, see? but you ain't. You ain't, are y'?

LIZ. But . . . what's it for? What am I to you, eh? What do you want to come 'ere for and make things easy for me? What call 'a you got to think about me?

NANCE. Never mind about that. Ain't it enough as I do?

LIZ [*thinking over what* NANCE *has said*]. I don't seem to understand rightly. [*Suspiciously.*] What's yo'r mother got to do with it?

NANCE. Mother? Did I say mother? Oh, if anythink was to 'appen I mean. There'd be always a 'ome, see. You never know. What I mean to say, it's well to 'ave some one to fall back on for a rainy day. . . .

LIZ. Does y' mother know?

NANCE. No.

LIZ. Does . . . does anybody else know?

NANCE [*quickly*]. Nobody doesn't know. I 'aven't said nothink to nobody. You will let me 'ave 'im?

LIZ *shakes her head.*

NANCE. Don't be silly. It's a chance, ain't it?

LIZ. I ain't goin' to.

NANCE. You'll be sorry if you don't.

LIZ. Go and be sorry y'self. I don't want nothink from you.

NANCE *makes a movement towards the cradle.*

LIZ. I told you to come out of that, didn't I ? Look 'ere, I don't want to seem 'asty nor yet uncivil-spoken, but I can't make y'out, and that's the truth. What's makin' y' do it ? Tell me that.

NANCE. It's plain enough, ain't it ? Yor father's goin' to give you the chuck, ain't 'e ? Well, I've offered to take away the cause. It ain't many as would, is it ? An' 'e'd 'ave a 'appy 'ome an' always be well cared for. Come, think what a chance it is for 'im—let alone you. It doesn't seem 'ardly fair to let a innacent child suffer, as 'e will do, if you 'ave to go.

LIZ [*wavering*]. Where are y' livin' now ?

NANCE. Walworth Causeway.

LIZ. Them flats ?

NANCE. Yes. Lookin' on the church. You know—by the Blue Unicorn where the trams stop. Opposyte the 'orspital. It's a nice place, it is. Better than 'ere. [*She looks round.*

LIZ [*half to herself*]. Better than where I'll be to-morrow.

NANCE [*seeing her advantage*]. It'd be a comfort to you to know 'e was took care of, wouldn't it ?

LIZ. It'd be only till I got a place of me own, see.

NANCE. Oh, that'd be all right.

LIZ. And I should want to see 'im, y'know.

NANCE. Well, it ain't so very far.

LIZ. It's no good. I can't.

NANCE. Think. It'd be worse if you found you couldn't keep 'im. You wouldn't like to see 'im starve.

LIZ. I s'pose I could starve with 'im, couldn't I ? We could both starve, couldn't we, same as other poor girls and their babies what's got into trouble.

NANCE. Oh well, of course, if you like . . .

LIZ. 'Oo'd look after 'im when you was out ?

NANCE. Shouldn't *be* out—'less I took 'im with me.

LIZ [*thinking*]. They said they'd take me on again at 'Awton's if I could give 'em the 'ole day. Y'see I bin tryin' for 'alf time.

NANCE. 'Course they would.

LIZ [*wavering painfully*]. You'd be good to 'im. I—I don't more than 'alf like it. 'E's got such pretty ways. You'd be good to 'im if I let you 'ave 'im ?

NANCE. Same as if 'e was me own.

LIZ. 'E—'e 'asn't 'ardly been out of me sight. Mind je it'd only be for a time.

NANCE. Oh, we can talk about that afterwards. You will ?

LIZ. If it was for 'is good . . .

NANCE. Of course it's for 'is good. You're goin' to, ain't you ? It's only bein' sensible.

LIZ I wonder. It is 'ard. P'raps I'd better.

She kneels by the cradle.

NANCE. That's right. I thought you'd come round to see it. You're

actin' for the right an'll never 'ave to blame y'self. It's all for the best as you might say. There, I'm sure I'm very glad to be a 'elp to you in y' trouble. We're friends, aren't we ? You see, I owed you something I did. Why Bill'd 'a married you if I 'adn't got round 'im. That's the size of it. [Liz *looks at her, but* Nance, *thinking she has gained her point, talks on.*] 'E was always fond o' you, 'e was—a sight fonder than what 'e was of me, and if you'd 'a been a bit smarter, you'd 'a been Mrs. 'Ablot this minute 'stead of me standin' 'ere, in Gawd's sight I say it.

Liz, *who has been kneeling by the cradle, rises to her feet. Her eyes are distended and fixed upon* Nance.

Liz [*in a tense voice*]. You think 'e'd 'a' married me ?

Nance. 'E said so.

Liz. Bible truth !

Nance. So 'elp me.

Liz *stands still. Looking at her intently, her eyes fall on* Nance's *black dress.*

Liz. Stop a bit.

Nance. What's up ? What a' y' looking at ? What's the matter with y' ?

Liz *moves towards her.*

Liz. I thought you said your baby died last night.

Nance. So 'e did.

Liz. Look at your dress.

Nance. What's the matter with my dress ?

Liz [*touching it with her finger*]. Crape !

Nance *looks down.*

Liz [*catching her breath*]. Where's Bill ?

There is a pause.

Nance. 'E died on Monday week.

Liz. Bill ! Bill ! [*With a cry as she realises what on a sudden she has suspected.*] Not Bill !

Nance. 'E died on Monday week. I did mean to tell y' Liz . . .

Liz. Bill ! 'E didn't. It ain't true. What should 'e die for—a great strong fella. 'E's left y'. It ain't true.

Nance. Yes. 'E's left me. Left me for six foot of earth. I did mean to tell you, I did. Straight I did. 'E come 'ome wet one night—to the skin. He'd been workin' down at Lime'us', and the next day 'e was took something crool. The doctor said it was Ammonia—double Ammonia I think—I couldn't 'ardly crawl about meself at the time. 'E was better the night before 'e died, and 'e says, " Give us a drink," 'e says, and I says, " I've only a drop of cold tea," I says. And 'e says, " That'll do," 'e says. And then 'e wouldn't say nothing to me. So I says, " What are you thinking of ? " I says ; and 'e says, " I'm thinkin' I'd 'a gone to 'ell for Liz Peacemeal," 'e says, " an' now I got to go to 'ell without 'er."

The face of Liz *is transfigured.*

Liz [*to herself*]. 'E did love me then. 'E did love me.

Nance. There ain't many would tell y'. But what's it matter now 'oo 'e loved ? Well, I mustn't stop talkin'. [*She looks at the cradle.*] I'll take 'im now please.

Liz [*breathing hard*]. No.

NANCE. What ?

LIZ. No.

NANCE [*frightened*]. What d'y' mean ? You ain't goin' back on it. You said I should.

She looks at LIZ. LIZ *is trembling and her whole aspect is changed.*

LIZ. If I never speak another word.

NANCE. Don't say that. It was all settled.

LIZ. Was it ? Well, now it's not. Bill's child. Bill's !

NANCE. You must let me 'ave it. You must. See, I'll buy it from you. I'll do anything you like to ask. I'll work me fingers to the bone. You shall 'ave the funeral—the best you can order at Parkinses and I'll pay for it. I don't care. I don't care. I must 'ave it. I can keep it. I don't want it to die. I don't want the only thing 'e's left to die.

She moves towards cradle.

LIZ. To die ! [*She starts to her feet.*] To die. You say that. Listen to me. You took Bill from me and I didn't say nothing. You took 'im from me as would 'a died for 'im, and you let 'im die 'isself. You did. You did. You didn't love 'im as I loved 'im, else 'e couldn't 'a died. I'd a made 'im live. I'd 'a kep' 'im alive or died too. You take 'im from me an' y' kill 'im, and then you kill 'is child, an' come 'ere to cheat me for mine—yes, *cheat* me. You wasn't goin' to tell me—no fear ! Not till you'd got 'im safe, you wasn't. But you ain't goin' to 'ave 'im. I wouldn't change my baby not for fifty million dead ones. He's mine ! mine ! mine !

NANCE. Garn. You don't know what ch' talkin' about ! 'E'd a died —Bill—whether it was you or me married 'im. Doctor said 'e was bound to go soon as ever 'e clap eyes on 'im. If 'e didn't love me I loved 'im right enough. What d'y' think I took 'im from you for ? To play the pianna ? My Gawd and 'im wantin' you. I didn't get s'much out of it, did I ?

LIZ. You got all you'll get. You thought you'd took everything from me and were going to take 'im too. But you 'adn't, and now you never can.

[*Pause.*

NANCE. You won't let me 'ave 'im ?

LIZ. *NO !* [*laughs*] *You !* [*laughs again*]. His child when it was me he loved.

NANCE [*with a change of front*]. Pshaw ! Loved y' ! Loved y' ! Bah, you little fool ! You always did believe every silly thing as anybody liked to stuff y' up with. Loved y' ! 'Oo did 'e marry, eh ? 'Oo did 'e marry ? Love y' ! I only said that to kid y' into lettin' me 'ave the child.

LIZ [*breaks out*]. Ain't no good tellin' me that now. I know now. I *know*. Go away. If you touch it I'll kill you. Go away and take your child with you. *Go !*

LIZ *stands guarding the cradle and, having spoken, is silent.* NANCE, *vanquished, slowly wrapping up her own child, goes sullenly to the door. There she makes a savage gesture as if she would speak but changes her mind and goes out in silence.*

LIZ [*with a long breath, as the door shuts, and looking up*]. Oh, Bill, I wouldn't 'ave it no different. I've suffered for y' and got to suffer, but oh, Bill, it's worth it It's worth it. You loved me.

She looks down at the cradle and breaks into a smile.

LIZ. It's all right, my baby. My little boy what they can't take from me. Oh, it ain't all un'appiness. I wouldn't 'ave it no different, not if it was to come all over again.

The latch is heard and ALF *enters. He gives the clothes-basket a kick and lifts it on to the table.*

ALF. Where's mother ?

LIZ. I d'know.

ALF. I've seen father.

LIZ. Well ?

ALF. 'E says if 'e comes back and finds y' 'ere 'e'll let you know about it.

LIZ. Well ?

ALF. 'E says it gives y' mother too much work to do, and 'e can't get his grub comfortable.

LIZ. All right.

ALF [*puts down basket and comes to her ; looking at cradle*]. 'E's a queer little blighter, ain't 'e ?

LIZ. 'E's wakin'. See. See 'im smile.

ALF [*fumbling in his pocket*]. Liz.

LIZ. Eh ?

ALF. 'Ere, don't say nothink. 'Ere's 'alf a quid. Stuff the old man up with that—bob at a time, see ?—and 'e won't turn y' out. 'E'll think better of it 'e will. I know father.

LIZ. Oh, Alf.

ALF. 'Ere that's all right. Tell mother I've took the basket.

[*He goes out.*

LIZ *lifts the child from the cradle and seating herself before the fire with her back to the audience, takes her baby on her knee and, as far as may be seen, proceeds to nurse it.*

MRS. PEACEMEAL *enters with an armful of clothes, which she puts beside ironing board-and then goes to the fire to fetch fresh irons.*

LIZ [*yielding to a sudden impulse*]. Mother, mother. Did you ever come to care for one of us when we was little—I mean more than for anything else in the world, so that all what could matter to y' was whether we lived or died ? [*She takes hold of the old woman's skirt.*

MRS. PEACEMEAL *puts one hand on the girl's thick hair and fondles it tenderly for a moment, looking the while into the fire. Then she puts a cushion or something behind her to make her more comfortable, gently pats her on the shoulder, and picking up two irons returns to the table under the window. The curtain comes down as she resumes ironing.*

London in Hogarth's Works

By E. Beresford Chancellor

Just as some writers of fiction may be regarded as essentially topographical novelists—Dickens was one, and in our own day Mr. Hardy is another—so there are painters, other, of course, than those who take landscapes as their chief *motif*, the *locale* of whose pictures is a more or less distinguishing feature of their output. Of these Hogarth is by far the most notable, not only because of the intrinsic value of his work, its moral worth and the consummate insight into character and the springs of human nature which it exhibits, but also because it reflects the manners and customs of the eighteenth century and because it serves as a valuable "document" on the landmarks of London at that period.

With a relatively few exceptions, all Hogarth's pictures exhibit this interesting characteristic, a characteristic which in these days, when far more general attention is being paid to the notable features of London than has probably been the case at any other period, is of the highest value not only to those who care to investigate closely this fascinating subject, but also to those whose interest in works of art is quite vitally intensified by the presentation, in pictorial form, of the architectural features of the city as they appeared a century and a half ago. Hogarth knew his London better perhaps than any other painter of the period; better probably than any other painter. He was born there, he lived there, he died there; all his interests, notwithstanding his occasional flittings to Chiswick where he lies buried, centred in the metropolis and its ever-varying aspects. From his earliest days, when his father kept a school in Ship Court, Old Bailey, to when he became a member of the St. Martin's Lane Academy and was a frequenter of the Artists' Club at "The Turk's Head" in Gerrard Street, Soho, he was conversant with the multifarious life of the city and was never tired of noting its manners and moralising on its amazing complexity.

What wonder then that when he began to transfer to canvas

the results of his observations, the landmarks which had riveted his boyish gaze should find a place in his work only subsidiary to the delineation of the character and the customs which had attracted the attention of his maturer years. So marked indeed is this that those pictures in which the casual observer will merely see revealed the life of the period are really topographical documents as essentially correct as those in which Canaletto and Scott set forth the result of their special observation of London's outlines.

Take, for example, *The Rake's Progress*, the eight pictures forming which remarkable series hang in the Soane Museum. Plate 4 represents, it will be remembered, the arrest of the Rake for debt, and the spot chosen is that at the top of St. James's Street. The picturesque outlines of Henry VIII.'s Gateway to the Palace are to be seen as, little altered, they may be to-day. On the right hand,* a projecting erection bears the figure of a White Horse, indicating the original White Horse Cellar which existed on this side of Piccadilly before it was moved to its present position. A little way down St. James's Street may be seen White's Club, which in those days was on the west side of the thoroughfare, occupying the one-time abode of the Countess of Northumberland, five doors from the bottom of the street. In 1733 the Club premises were burnt down, but soon after sprang up again at Gaunt's Coffee House close by on the same side. Hogarth shows flashes of forked lightning playing against the building, and as *The Rake's Progress* was painted between the years 1734 and 1736, the indication of the Club's then recent baptism of fire is obvious. In early states of the print of this picture some boys are shown playing at dice, and the post which stands close by has the word "Black's" written on it; an eminently Hogarthian method of drawing attention by antithesis to the gambling, in high life and in low, then prevalent.

The next plate (No. 5) of *The Rake's Progress* (published on June 28, 1735) has a special interest, for it gives us the interior of the old church at Marylebone, which was taken down in 1741. On the front of the gallery a tablet is shown, bearing the words:

> "This Church of St. Mary-le-Bone was Beautified in the year 1725.
>
> THOS. SICE
THOS. HORN } Churchwardens";

* In the engravings this is reversed to the left.

and on one of the pew doors is to be deciphered these words :

" THESE : PEWES : VNSCRVD : AND : TANE : IN : SUNDER,
IN : STONE : THERS : GRAVEN : WHAT : IS : VNDER.
TO : WIT : A VALT : FOR : BURIAL : THERE : IS
WHICH : EDWARD : FORSET : MADE : FOR : HIM : AND : HIS."

This inscription may still be seen at the end of the right-hand gallery of the present church, the first two lines being the original, the rest having been copied at a later date. Another interesting relic which has been preserved here, and which is shown by Hogarth, is the mural tablet to the Taylor family " composed of lead and gilt over." As this picture is probably the only representation of the interior of the old church extant, its value as a topographical document is obvious.

Two other plates in this series (Nos. 7 and 8) represent portions of the interiors of the Fleet Prison and Bedlam Hospital. They have thus a certain importance, although they are of too general a character to require any particular notice ; and they are chiefly valuable for the insight they give us into the archaic methods then in vogue of dealing with the impecunious and the insane. Incidentally they have a connection, for madness seems as apparent on the features of those imprisoned for debt as on those of the wretched occupants of the asylum.

The Harlot's Progress does not yield so much topographical data. Indeed, the only picture in this series that need be noticed is No. 1, in which the "Bell Inn" indicated would appear to be the hostelry of that name, once situated in Wood Street, Cheapside.

The *mise en scène* of the six plates forming the famous *Marriage À-la-Mode* series is placed indoors, and beyond revealing characteristic impressions of London interiors of the period is of less topographical importance than is customary with Hogarth ; although the view of old London Bridge, seen through the window of the room depicted in Plate 6, is of the highest interest and value, and the splendid apartment in Plate 2 is said to have been taken from the drawing-room of 5 Arlington Street, once the home of Sir Robert Walpole.

In *Industry and Idleness*, however, a variety of well-known landmarks make their appearance. The interior of the church in Plate 2 is not dissimilar from that of St. Mary-le-Strand, although I am unaware that it has been actually identified. What, however, purports to be the exterior of the church in Plate 3 is shown to be constructed of red brick with stone facings, which would at once put St. Mary's out of court. That

is, of course, if the same church is represented in the two pictures.*

In Plate 5, where the Idle Apprentice is seen in the boat on his way to the vessel that is to carry him abroad, a particularly Hogarthia touch is introduced in the characteristic position of the apprentice's hand above his forehead, which indicates that the boat is at the moment passing a once well-known place on the Surrey side of the river, called Cuckold's Point, three miles below London Bridge, near Rotherhithe Church.

In the next picture, *The Industrious Apprentice Married*, the scene depicted is on the east side of Fish Street Hill, a little south of the Monument, a portion of which can be seen. The band, a not unusual concomitant of weddings at that time, is drawn up before the house of the apprentice's employers, Messrs. West and Goodchild (by-the-by, in the original states of the print from this picture, Hogarth had reversed the names, and only transposed them on the impropriety of putting the junior partner's name first being pointed out to him), and a well-known beggar of the period, known as "Philip-in-the-Tub," is seen holding one of the ballads he was accustomed to produce on these occasions.

In consequence of the statue of Sir William Walworth being introduced into the next (No. 8) plate, it has been conjectured that Hogarth intended the dining-room there shown to represent that of the old Fishmongers' Hall near London Bridge, which had been erected by Jerman in place of the earlier one destroyed in the Great Fire, although it is said to bear little resemblance to that apartment. Certainly a statue of Walworth did stand in a niche behind the Master's Chair, until 1827 when Jerman's erection was replaced by another building, but whether the rest of Hogarth's picture is as accurate is doubtful. In any case, there seems little question that the painter intended the room to represent what had for many years served as a splendid Dining Hall for the Company.

The striking antithesis between this picture, where the Industrious Apprentice has become Sheriff of London, and the next, where his idle companion is seen surrounded in a night-cellar by thieves and murderers, is highly characteristic of Hogarth's method of pointing his moral. The scene shown in Plate 9 is said by Nichols to represent a cellar in "Blood Bowl Alley, down by the fishmonger's near Water Lane, in Fleet Street." Dr. Trusler, on the other hand, gives the *locale* as in Chick Lane, Smithfield, where, he states, a so-called "Blood

* It may conceivably be St. Benet's, Paul's Wharf.

Bowl House" existed about 1747, the year in which Hogarth's set of prints appeared. Major, who edited Trusler's "Hogarth Moralised," in a note on this, adds that, "Horrid and disgusting as the name (Blood Bowl House) is, it was probably only a satirical corruption of either the intricate Blue Boar Court in that part of Smithfield, or of Blue Boar Court, the first turning beyond the passage to St. Bride's Church in Dorset Street, Fleet Street."

In the following plate, where the idle apprentice is brought before his former companion, the scene is probably laid in the old Justice Room on the west side of Guildhall Yard, which preceded the later building erected there in 1789. At any rate, it was not in the present Mansion House, which was not occupied till at least six or seven years after Hogarth produced his series.

Tyburn Tree is depicted in Plate 11, with the stand erected for viewing the gruesome sight. The hills of Hampstead and Highgate appear in the background, and the whole scene is a remarkable picture of the sordid and depraved specimens of humanity who congregated here on these occasions. It is difficult to imagine such a sight as here represented taking place practically where the Marble Arch now stands, even when we remember that a century and a half divides us from it.

In the last scene—that in which the Industrious Apprentice becomes Lord Mayor of London—we have a view of the Show as it appeared in the middle of the eighteenth century. The spot chosen is at the top of Cheapside. We can see an angle of St. Paul's and what seems intended for the spire of St. Bride's, Fleet Street, in the distance. In a balcony of a house—"The King's Head"—on the left side of the plate, Frederick Prince of Wales and the Princess of Wales view the procession, although the usual place for the Royal Family to do this was in front of Bow Church, a spot, however, from which it may be supposed that "Fritz" would be banished owing to the ill blood that existed at this period between him and his royal father.

The two plates known respectively as *Beer Street* and *Gin Lane* are interesting to us here as including two of London's church steeples. If that in the former is rather difficult to identify, the latter is recognisable at once, from the statue which surmounts its summit, as being the spire of St. George's, Bloomsbury, on the top of which his Majesty George I., in effigy, was placed at the charges of Hucks the rich brewer, who died in 1740. This being so, it is easy to trace the then low dilapidated purlieus of St. Giles-in-the-Fields, in the miserable surroundings shown in the foreground of the plate.

But it is in the series known as *The Four Times of Day* that Hogarth has most consistently reproduced the features of the London of his time. The first of these prints (which were published in 1738) represents, it will be remembered, Covent Garden, but, as was not unusual with the painter, the situation of the buildings is reversed, and thus what is now the National Sporting Club is depicted as being on the south, instead of the north, side of the church. This house, to-day one of the chief architectural features of the neighbourhood, has an interesting history. Among its residents were Denzel Holles and Sir Kenelm Digby; later it became the London house of the Bishops of Durham, at which time it was usual for the foundlings of the parish to be laid upon its doorstep! It was rebuilt at the beginning of the eighteenth century for Admiral Edward Russell, afterwards Earl of Orford, probably by that Captain Winde who erected Newcastle House in Lincoln's Inn Fields, and Buckingham House, the precursor of the present Buckingham Palace. After Russell's death in 1727, it was taken by Lord Archer of Umberslade, a relative of Thomas Archer, who was responsible for the Church of St. John in Smith Square. Subsequently, James West, President of the Royal Society, lived here; and later still one Lowe opened it as an hotel—one of the first of the kind in London. Such it remained till it became known to our forefathers as "Evans's," and after this it developed into its present form as a noted club-house.

The church shown by Hogarth, although similar in its outlines to the one which exists to-day, is not the same. For Inigo Jones's "handsomest barn in England," as he termed it, was burnt down in 1795, but its successor was re-erected, by Hardwicke, on the exact lines of the earlier building.

A comparison of this print with the Covent Garden of to-day will show how, notwithstanding the presence of these two landmarks, the place has changed since Hogarth drew its outlines on a wintry morning in 1738.

The second plate (by far the best) of this series is entitled *Noon*, and introduces us to the congregation issuing from the French church in Hog Lane, afterwards Crown Street, St. Giles's. This place of worship, later to become an Independent chapel, stood on the west side of the lane near Little Compton Street. The thoroughfare is now incorporated in the Charing Cross Road, and the only feature recognisable in the print to-day is the tower of St. Giles-in-the-Fields, which church Flitcroft had then finished about five years, and which succeeded the building consecrated by Laud in 1631.

In 1738 Sadler's Wells was far outside London; to-day, however, it is to all intents and purposes an integral part of the city. How rural it appeared in the middle of the eighteenth century may be seen by the third print of *The Four Times of Day*, where we are introduced, on a summer's evening, to the spot near the New River where the hostelry known as the "Sir Hugh Middleton's Head" stood. At one time people came hither to drink the waters, which were noted so early as 1683, although a writer in 1697, in describing Islington as "a large village, half a league from London," adds that it is a place "where you drink waters that do you neither good nor harm, provided you don't take too much of them."

With night we are in the vicinity of Charing Cross. That it is May 29 is evident from the bonfire and the sprig of oak fastened to the barber's sign in the foreground of the picture. Le Sueur's statue of Charles I. set up in 1674, the first equestrian statue ever erected in England, can be seen at the end of the narrow street. As "The King on Horseback," as it was called at a time when it served the purposes of a signboard, is shown facing the spectator, the lane indicated would seem to be to the south of what is now Trafalgar Square.

Taken as a whole, the works of Hogarth leave little to topographical imagination. Indeed, the painter seems to have devoured the city with artistic activity. Here we have Temple Bar in the scene of the "Burning of the Rumps" from "Hudibras"; there Southwark Fair with Southwark church forming a notable background. In the *Man of Taste* and in the *Masquerades and Operas* we see Burlington House (in the latter plate, inscribed by a curiously accurate anticipation, "Accademy (*sic*) of Arts") with their side hits at its noble owner and his henchman, Kent, whose weakness as a draughtsman is further insisted upon in the parody (actual copy, Hogarth called it) of his unfortunate altar-piece once in St. Clement's Danes. *Rich's Glory* shows us the actor-manager passing from Lincoln's Inn Fields to the new theatre in Covent Garden, where the open market and the dial that formerly stood in the centre of the "piazza" is indicated.

In the *Enraged Musician* the scene is supposed to be laid at the lower end of St. Martin's Lane, and certainly the spire and porch of St. Martin's Church, Gibbs's masterpiece, can be plainly seen; and Plate 5 of the *Marriage À-la-Mode* is said to reproduce a room in the "Turk's Head," Bagnio, but whether it be the one in Bow Street or that in James Street, Golden Square, or one of those elsewhere in the town at that period, is uncertain,

although George Augustus Sala, rather curiously, places the scene at "The Key" in Chandos Street.

The Royal Cockpit in Bird Cage Walk, whose position is still shown by Cockpit Stairs; the Dissecting Room of Surgeon's Hall; Dr. Misaubin's Museum in St. Martin's Lane, are among the interiors which Hogarth has perpetuated, as he has those of innumerable private dwellings, from mansions in the west to counting-houses in the east.

The Green Park and Hog Lane; the Mall and Seven Dials; St. James's Street and Tottenham Court Road, are all present in his work; all treated with that care for detail and accuracy of presentation which was one of his notable characteristics; while the little vignette of old London Bridge seen through the window of the last of the *Marriage À-la-Mode* series, is a masterpiece of concentrated accuracy and topographical draughtsmanship. When we peep out of that window we are to all intents and purposes actually looking at one of the most notable features of the old city, as it was before it fell a victim to stern utilitarian necessity.

"All who love the dramatic representations of actual life are admirers of Hogarth," wrote Allan Cunningham, and the story of the gentleman who, on being asked what book in his library he most liked to read, replied "Shakespeare," and after him "Hogarth," is eloquent of the appeal which the great satirist of the eighteenth century makes to those whose interest in the life of the past and in the outlines of the metropolis is as vital as is their appreciation of incisive moralising and consummate technique.

Every Day Brings a Ship

By Ella d'Arcy

Every ship brings a word,
Well for those who have no fear
Looking seaward well assured
That the word the vessel brings
Is the word they want to hear.

The snow was falling when Anna von Ciriacy awoke.

She opened her eyes with reluctance, for she dreaded the inevitable day. She longed to sleep again, to return to the land of dreams, which she found so much pleasanter than the land of real life. And this morning she had been dreaming the particularly beautiful dream, which haunted her sleep more and more frequently as the years went by. That she stood, namely, on a great stage singing to a theatre thronged with people, and at the end of her song wreaths of laural and bouquets of roses were carried up to her from all parts of the house. Her happy ears were filled with thunderous applause, when in spite of her resistance she awoke to the sound of rapping at her door.

"Come in!" she cried petulantly, and Doerchen, one of the servant-girls, entered the room to make up the stove. She was followed by Mam'zelle, Anna's maid, carrying the coffee. Mam'zelle set the tray down on the table by the bedside, crossed over to the windows, and the heavy curtains slid back at her touch. The soft, transparent gloom of the vast bed-chamber was suddenly exchanged for an intense white light, for that strange white light which is reflected up from a world of snow.

By turning a little on her pillows Anna could follow the big, sparse flakes moving close outside the glass, upwards and downwards, hither and thither, as though each one were animated by an individual caprice of its own. Farther away nothing was visible but a scintillating whiteness, except through the lower panes of the left-hand window, where the tops of the elm-trees beyond the moat appeared spread out like pieces of seaweed, or dark delicate fretwork, against the white sky.

"Still snowing!" said Anna dispiritedly. "Du lieber Gott, how I hate the snow."

To her it resembled some magic intangible spiderweb, spun round Schwoebber to cut her off from the outer world. And when she could not see the hills beyond which Vienna lay, her thoughts became wingless and crippled. It seemed then as if soul as well as body were chained down to Schwoebber's worm-eaten furniture, to its moth-eaten tapestries, to its crumbling walls.

"I don't think it will snow much longer," Mam'zelle affirmed, consolingly. "I think we shall soon have some sunshine. Karl says the weather is clearing."

Anna, accustomed to her maid's invariable optimism, was unmoved by it. She knew that merely to live with her mistress, merely to wait upon her, was all that Lotte desired.

So she resettled herself with a sigh among the lace-frilled pillows, and clasped her hands behind her head. Every one but herself was happy at Schwoebber. Even Doerchen, of the uncomely face, clumsy figure, and grubby crimson paws, was perfectly happy and content.

She watched the girl kneeling before the high porcelain stove, to rake together the smouldering embers of last night's fire, before building it up anew. A poor pathetic figure, Doerchen, with few birthrights, and neither education nor natural gifts. A girl with no outlook beyond the village horizon, with no higher ambition than that of attaining, later on, to the rank of chambermaid. And yet happy and content, and therefore to be envied. . . .

Anna kept silence so long as Doerchen remained in the room. Then, "You always think that we are going to have sunshine," she complained, while Mam'zelle helped her to slip into a pale blue satin bed-jacket, then handed her a silver hand-mirror and comb, that she might draw from her forehead the wandering meshes of dark hair. "But I can only look back to it. It used to be sunny in Vienna. Oh, Lotte! Do you never regret the old days of poverty and success? Our shabby little rooms in the Wollzeile, our dinners off leberwurst, all the dear, vociferous, warm-hearted artists, who came to my Sunday evenings? Mladenoff . . . do you remember Mladenoff, the Bulgarian violincellist? And Fräulein Ida his friend, and Azoff the Russian, and the two fair Novregard brothers? Ah, where are they all now? Vanished, gone for ever, like those happy, careless days!"

"Yes," the maid admitted, "those were good days certainly, but now that I am older . . ."

"Ah! we are both older!"

"I don't think I want to go back to them . . ."

"If only we could!"

"For I have become accustomed to Schwoebber, I am fond of it, I believe no other place could ever again please me so well."

Anna sipped her coffee, broke pieces from her hoernchen bread, and spoke meditatively. "Yes, how queer it is! When you and I first came here, Lotte, I was charmed with everything, and you, poor girl, were always in tears. Now I grow wearier every day, and you grow plumper and rosier. Comparatively speaking, of course, for neither of us will ever have any roses to boast of. We must leave those to Fräulein Rosa."

The sallow, dark-eyed maid, standing by the bedside, fixed an adoring glance upon the dark-eyed, ivory-skinned mistress, who smiled back at her from the pillows.

"Oh, Fräulein Rosa! She has a great deal too much colour for my taste. Good for a milkmaid, perhaps, but not for a high-born lady. No, I see nothing to admire in the Fräulein myself, no distinction, no style. . . . It's inexplicable to me."

"That others admire her? Well, plenty of people do. I, for one, and I think Dr. Bergiest for another." She said to herself, "Probably because Rosa is so healthy-looking. Of course, a look of good health appeals to a doctor, not perhaps in the majority of people, no, that would be against his interests, but certainly in the case that he were looking for a wife. . . ." And parallel with this train of thought ran another. "Rosa, in spite of her roses, hasn't lately seemed to me as well as usual. She's even more silent than formerly. I wonder if anything's the matter with her, or if she has something on her mind?"

Aloud Anna said, "By the way, how is your neuralgia, Lotte? Karl took down my note to Bergiest last night, I suppose? When he comes to see you this morning, he shall see Fräulein too. I don't think she is so wonderfully well, either, in spite of her roses."

She lay musing while Mam'zelle moved about the room preparing for the morning toilette, and suddenly in her mind, the two parallel lines of thought converged, and joined. The result pleased her.

"Lotte!" she called out, "wouldn't our handsome doctor make the Fräulein a very good husband? What do you say?"

The woman stood still, and sent back a swift scrutinising glance.

"Has the gnädige Frau really any intention of marrying

Fräulein to the Herrn Doctor? I am very glad to hear it. But I wish Dorfheim were farther away."

"How you do dislike that poor creature, Lotte! I can't understand you. She's uninteresting, I admit . . . every one is uninteresting at Schwoebber . . . but how has she ever harmed you? The truth is, you admire no one but me, you think no one in the world good, or clever, or beautiful, but your mistress?"

"If the gnädige Frau had remained on the stage every one else would have been of my opinion," declared the maid.

Anna's thoughts reverted to her dream. "How could I ever have left it!" she wondered, and tried, in vain, to bring back, even for an instant, the mental condition which had induced her to think Fame and Art well exchanged for a "von" to her name, and a dull castle in Altenau.

How had it ever come to pass that she, *die schöne Jüdin*, as she had been known in Viennese musical circles, the possessor of a voice that promised to be a fortune to her, sensitive, cultured, intellectual, how could she ever have thought herself in love with Boris von Ciriacy, a mere fox-shooting, boar-spearing squire, who found more congenial companionship with Karl Hempel, his ranger, than with her, and the music of his dogs a thousand times more agreeable than the voice which once had enamoured him?

Her ill-judged passion for Boris was long extinct. She had gauged his limitations early in the ten years of their married life, she had learned with a certainty which, unhappily, admitted of no doubt, how immeasurably he was her intellectual inferior.

In the beginning, his family had opposed his marriage with a Jewess, an opera-singer, a mere Fräulein Tannenbaum. The Ciriacys had seen an immense disparity between their social position and hers. But Anna knew now that there is no disparity so immense, nor so unbridgable, as the disparity in intellect and culture.

Boris never would understand her, never appreciate her point of view, never rise to her ideals. But she knew him, unfortunately, through and through, as completely, as exhaustively, as she knew the few books in the castle, its many suites of rooms, its score of commonplace inhabitants.

Ah, she knew all these intuitively, without needing any intercourse with them! She knew Doerchen as well as she knew Lotte, she knew Rosa Ament, a poor relation of the Ciriacys, to whom had been given a home in Schwoebber at Anna's own suggestion, just as well as she knew Boris himself.

It was this intimate knowledge of every one about her, this feeling that everything was experienced, everything explored, which rendered life so intolerable.

Each morning, before getting up, she lived through, in weary anticipation, the entire day. She forecast all that Boris would say to her, when he should come to pay his customary five-minutes' visit. She could hear the precise remarks which she and Rosa would exchange, when they should meet at luncheon. She foresaw the uneventful events of the winter's afternoon, the despairful length of the evening when she would sit, turning listlessly the pages of a twice-read book, and Rosa, in absolute silence, would crochet at her interminable edgings. Boris, meanwhile, would be smoking and drinking hot beer with Karl in the gun-room.

But the tiny flame of interest kindled in her mind a few instants since, by the juxtaposition of Rosa's image with Bergiest's, began to flicker more strongly among her grey thoughts, to redden their edges with a running fire. Rosa's crochet . . . she must have hundreds of yards laid by in her wardrobe, fine lace-like edgings suitable for the most delicate underwear, and broad, heavy, handsome lengths for the trimming of curtains and counterpanes. The ultimate end of all being the trousseau dreamed of by every young girl.

Rosa Ament was no longer a young girl but a woman of twenty-seven, yet having begun, as a *Backfisch*, to crochet for her trousseau, while her carroty hair still hung in a long plait down her back, she had continued to crochet ever since. That gave fifteen or sixteen years of steady production. Prodigious! Anna envisaged the sanguine perseverance of the task with admiration, pity, and a touch of scorn. It was admirable to be so industrious, pathetic to be content with so monotonous and exasperating an amusement, pathetic too that no suitor had ever presented himself, but, at the same time, remembering the long progression of adorers who had illuminated her own girlhood, she could not evade a sort of contempt for the woman who had been left aside.

Her natural kindliness suppressed it at once. It was not yet too late for Rosa to marry, and Bergiest suddenly appeared to Anna as the Heaven-sent husband. She was astonished that she had never thought of him before. For he was constantly at the Castle, and now that she considered the subject, she realised that he often came without any particular cause. He "happened to be passing," and so thought he would look in . . . or, he had "found the name of the author which the gnädige Frau desired."

. . . Then, most certainly he admired Rosa. Had he not once said of her red hair that it was just the colour of red wine? Boris had jeered. "The colour of a fox's brush you mean!" And Rosa, with the savage prudery of the virgin, offended at being spoken of before her face, had got up and left the hall. Yes, certainly Bergiest thought of Rosa. But possibly Rosa was a little in love with the handsome doctor too?

Anna had not entertained this idea a couple of minutes before she was convinced of its truth. Innumerable trifles floated up before her vision, and all were confirmatory. It was the key to the puzzle, by which everything became clear. It explained Bergiest's visits as conclusively as it explained the lassitude and irritability she had observed in Rosa during the last few weeks. The position was too vague and indefinite. It was telling, naturally, upon the girl's nerves, but, no doubt, Bergiest did not venture to propose himself as husband to a Ciriacy? For, through her mother, Rosa Ament was a Ciriacy, and Bergiest was only showing a commendable consciousness of his middle-class station in life. But nevertheless he was an excellent young man, he would make Rosa a most desirable husband, and all the incidents of a courtship and marriage in the house would form a welcome break in the tedium of Anna's own life.

The mere possibility of such a break so cheered her that Ciriacy, entering at the moment, was given an unusually bright welcome.

Wearing a dark green shooting suit, with heavy boots, he creaked in on tip-toe from the door to the bedside. And this habit he had of treating her room as though it were a chapel, or a sick-chamber, annoyed her indescribably, although she forbore to complain.

Ciriacy was over six feet high, a man with yellow hair and a yellow beard, broad shoulders, and great, muscular hands. But when he looked at Anna his blue eyes were filled with timidity, his whole demeanour expressed the wish to please, and the fear of unwittingly giving offence. Now, he kissed the hand she held out, and sat down by the bedside.

"How are you, dear heart?" he asked her. "Have you slept well?"

"I always sleep well, Boso. What else is there to do at Schwoebber?"

"But that is good for your health. That is why you are looking so handsome this morning, and so young! You don't look a day more than eighteen."

Usually she accepted her husband's complimentary speeches as part of the daily routine. Now, she took up the mirror lying beside her, and examined herself critically.

"I look my full three and thirty years," she asserted. "I look more. I look older than you do." Vexation crisped her voice. "How in the world, Boris, do you contrive to keep your skin so smooth? You've not got a wrinkle!"

"I get up early, I go out into the fresh air, I take exercise," he answered gaily. "I'm just off again with Karl. He thinks the fox we lost yesterday has got into the Marienwald, and I'm set on having his coat to complete your carpet. He and the five others will make a fine, warm, *descente de lit* for you, eh? Just here, with their bushy tails lying out into the room."

Anna was not listening. "Have you breakfasted?" she asked, a polite inquiry suggested by the fact that she was still taking her own.

"A hunter's meal! Rosa made me one of her hare-pasties. It was *kolossal!*"

"That reminds me," said Anna, glad of the opportunity. "I fancy something is amiss with Rosa. It seems to me that she has changed very much lately. Haven't you observed it?"

Boris had observed nothing, and wanted to know what Rosa was grumbling about now?

Anna felt resentment. Boris, poor fellow, did generally rile her, but surely the fault was his, not hers? He had no delicacy of perception or sentiment, and while he would have shown an immediate interest had the trouble been with one of his horses or dogs, towards Rosa Ament, who was his own cousin, he was always obtuse and indifferent. As a punishment, Anna would not let him off an exposition of the girl's symptoms.

"She goes red and white if I look at her. A sharp word, a sudden noise, sets her trembling like a leaf, and she is, certainly, less cheerful than she used to be, less equable. She has become nervous and sensitive to a degree, and it seems to me she must have something on her mind?"

But Ciriacy refused to be alarmed.

"You are too imaginative, dear one," was his tranquil answer, and he rose, wandered to a window, and looked out. "I wish to Heaven," he exclaimed in a voice of sudden animation, "that this snow would stop! It covers all the tracks."

Anna called to him authoritatively. "Please come back and sit down. I want to talk to you. Bergiest will be up to-day to see Mam'zelle. I'll get him to examine Rosa too."

Ciriacy stared, whistled softly, and immediately apologised.

Then he shrugged his shoulders, as though to dismiss the subject, but Anna would not have it so dismissed.

"Rosa will be charmed to see Bergiest, and I prophesy he will be able to cure her without any physic!" She laughed to observe how mystified her husband looked.

"Dear Boso! When do you see anything?" She condescended to explain. "You think of nothing but sport, and you continue to look upon Rosa as the young girl that she was when she came to us ten years ago. You forget that she is now a woman, nearly twenty-eight, and woman-like, for all her demure ways, she has a secret, *un secret de cœur*, and I have discovered it!"

She paused to note with gratification the mild interest which began to widen Ciriacy's blue eyes.

She went on triumphantly: "Yes, Rosa has lost her heart to our handsome Bergiest, and I begin to suspect the loss occurred when he stayed here, for the three days' shooting, last Christmas. You remember that Sunday that you dined with the officers in Pyrmont? He and Rosa were together the whole day, for he had the *finesse* to bring me over the new 'Jean-Christophe' and I was so engrossed with it that I couldn't make conversation. But Rosa replaced me. Rosa was charming, and she, who is usually so quiet, so taciturn even, was all animation and smiles. It was then that I began to have my suspicions" . . . it was then that I ought to have had them! Anna corrected to herself . . . "and now I am sure, oh, quite sure, that she is in love with him! Trust me, I have a *flair*. I am always right in these things. And it would be a very suitable marriage for her. Bergiest is steady and clever, is getting on and will inherit some little property, when his mother dies."

"And 'our handsome Bergiest,' as you call him, who isn't handsome at all, a most commonplace type, does he too think of Rosa?"

"But, my poor Boso, he thinks of no one else!" An exaggerated way of putting it, perhaps, but then with Boris it was necessary to underline heavily. "What do you imagine he comes here for? *Nos beaux yeux?* And why did he bring her that pot of azaleas on the Sylvesterabend?"

"He brought one for you as well. . . ."

"Of course. As a bid for my approval. And believe me presents, from a man like Bergiest, mean a great deal. Middle-class folk require some very good reason before spending fifty pfennige on gifts. But he doesn't venture to go farther, he

isn't sure we should be pleased, so to-day I mean to speak to him, I mean to encourage him."

Anna's surmises having become convictions from the fact of being formulated, there remained only the details to be arranged.

"You would give Rosa a dot, ten, twenty thousand marks, eh? And I would provide the house-linen and trousseau. She wouldn't want furniture, for, of course, Bergiest would continue to live with his mother . . . Boso! . . . Are you listening? Then why don't you speak?"

The transitory interest had faded from Ciriacy's face. He was playing impatient bugle-calls with his finger-tips upon the quilt.

"I think, dear heart," said he, "I had best leave the matter in this beautiful hand." He bent his head and again kissed his wife's fingers. "Whatever seems good to you . . . and perhaps in this case to Rosa . . . will always seem good to me. Well, I must be off, I suppose, so *au revoir* till dinner-time."

He got up with a sigh of relief, which, faint as it was, did not escape Anna's disapproval, but she answered him smilingly, "*Au revoir* and good luck! Don't let Reynard trick you again. And please move the tray off the bed, will you, and give me that book. There! . . . No! The other, the whitish one. I shall read for an hour before I get up."

Yet she had hardly read a couple of pages of "Jean-Christophe's" sweet and tragic adventure with Sabine, when she changed her mind, and rang the bell to summon Mam'zelle to dress her.

Anna came into the great hall of Schwoebber absorbed in two items of news just given her by Lotte. Under any circumstances one of these must always have touched her nearly, but the other would have seemed the merest insignificant trifle in an ordinary scheme of existence.

She found in the hall her husband and Rosa Ament. Ciriacy sat on a corner of the table oiling the lock of his gun, and Rosa stood near him filling with fresh cartridges the belt which she held in her hand. Rosa's abundant red hair was full of vitality, colour, and firelight. It formed a crown of splendour posed above a pleasant, wholesome, but unindividualised face, the face of the superfluous woman who receives no homage and makes no claims.

A pile of beech-logs flamed and crackled upon the wide hearth, and a thousand miniature flames leaped responsive in

every salient point of the suits of armour, the stands of arms, the trophied weapons which decorated the walls.

On the bear-skin hearth-rug lay Kaiser, the boar-hound, trembling with eagerness, thud thudding the ground with his tail, and keeping his expectant eyes riveted to his master's face. But as Anna approached the fire, he slunk away under the table, knowing that she was intolerant of his presence in that part of the house.

Abstractedly she stood and held to the blaze, first one foot and then the other, chilled by their descent down the uncarpeted steps of stone. Then she looked at Ciriacy, and for the first time seemed to realise his presence.

"So you are not off yet?" she remarked. "Well, then, I shall see you start, and it's years, surely, since I enjoyed that privilege."

"You didn't do much reading," her husband told her.

"No, I remembered I wanted to be down early to meet Bergiest."

Rosa Ament had put aside the cartridge-belt at Anna's appearance, and had moved farther away. Now the colour rushed over her face into the crinkly golden roots of her hair. Anna noticed and understood the emotion aroused by the young man's name.

"Good morning, Rosa," she said, giving her a friendly nod. "Helping Boris as usual? He should consider himself lucky, I'm sure, to have some one like you perpetually looking after him. But don't neglect your housekeeping to-day whatever you do, for I want a particularly nice luncheon. Boris won't be here to profit by it, but I expect some one else will."

"Where's my flask?" Ciriacy demanded curtly. "Oh, on the mantelpiece is it? Then why in the world haven't you filled it for me? Go and fill it now."

Anna watched the girl colour again, this time at her cousin's authoritative tone.

"How can you speak to her like that, Boris?" she remonstrated. "It's horrid of you. You treat Rosa as if she were good for fetching and carrying and nothing else! If I were you, Rosa, I should strike, and let Boso fend for himself a little. I foresee he will have to do so entirely before very long!"

"Is the Herr Baron ready?" inquired a voice from the door, and Karl Hempel, the ranger, who was also Ciriacy's foster-brother, came into the hall, a man tall and big as Ciriacy himself, and six months older.

With Mam'zelle's communication in mind, Anna looked at

him attentively, and for the first time, perhaps the familiar figure which she had seen every day of her life for ten years past was considered by her with a human, personal interest. Yes, he was a fine-looking fellow, with a kind and faithful soul shining through his honest eyes. She noticed the same look in the eyes of Kaiser, who now emerged from his obscurity, trepidant, exultant, anticipating the signal to start.

Moved by an unusual whim, Anna helped her husband with the buckle of his belt, and taking the flask out of Rosa's hand, slipped it into his breast-pocket.

"Good-bye," said she, lifting her face towards his beard, and ignoring with heroism the combined smoke and stable smell.

He kissed her on the forehead between the smooth bandeaux of dark hair, threw Rosa a careless "Good-bye!" and, shouldering his gun, followed Karl and Kaiser down into the yard.

Anna and Rosa went out upon the steps to watch him go.

It was still snowing. Icicles a foot long hung from the mouth of the pump in the centre of the court. The cold was intense. When Ciriacy reached the archway which pierces the north wing of Schwoebber, giving access to the drawbridge across the moat, he turned and waved his hat towards the distance.

"Good news!" he shouted back to the two women. "Here comes the letter-carrier with love-letters for you both!"

Then he passed from their sight, although Kaiser's joyous chest-notes remained audible for some time after Anna had gone back into the hall.

She sat down by the fire to await the postman, whose arrival was the one excitement of the day. He never brought anything adequate to the expectations he aroused, but then mere expectancy has its charms.

Now he stumped in, short, sturdy, beaming, shaking the snow from his boots, wishing the Herrenschaften good day. He leaned his stick in a corner, unslung his leathern bag and dumped it down on the table.

Anna saw the daily newspapers for Ciriacy, and a couple of letters for him also. "Yes," Tueppen explained, "I met the Herr Baron on the bridge and showed him his letters, but he wouldn't take them. Said they were from tradesmen, and of no importance. But here is a letter for the gnädige Frau, and I am sorry to say nothing as usual for the Fräulein!"

He twinkled benignly on Rosa, who stood, looking out of window, at the far end of the hall. But she continued to gaze across the snowy park in the direction of the Marienwald, as though she did not hear.

Long after Tueppen had taken himself off to the kitchen, Anna remained turning her letter over and over on her knee, fearing to open it because of the envy which its contents must awaken, for she recognised the writing as Marie Zink's, the friend of her student-days at the Conservatoire, a girl who in voice, talent and appearance had been much less gifted than herself. But during the years which had since elapsed, the Zink had achieved a position in the musical world, recently had been given Iseult's *rôle* at the Vienna Hoftheater, and was now, of course, writing to tell the story of her first night's success.

By merely closing her eyes, Anna could bring every sight, sound, and smell of the theatre vividly to mind. It was as though she had left it only yesterday. She had loved it all with enthusiasm—green-room, boards, the world of artists, her own art. Now she did not sing for months at a time. There was no one to sing to, no one capable of appreciating a voice naturally beautiful and exquisitely trained. To sing for herself filled her with unappeasable longings, flung her into depths of despair. So she schooled herself to forget she was an artist, and allowed the grand piano in the drawing-room to remain permanently out of tune.

But there were moments when her vigilance relaxed, when, reckless of the reaction, she gave herself up to the vision of what might have been. Such a moment faced her now, and she asked herself why, after all, it should not be ? Why not break with the present, live out her life after her own fashion, cultivate her individuality, make use of her gifts ? She saw herself living again in the Wollzeile with Lotte, practising arduously, at night holding a whole theatre silent, breathless, while clear and true her voice rose higher and higher, as the lark rises and sings, until the sweet, the strong, the splendid topmost note was struck triumphantly, was held with ease, was let go softly with regret. Then the pause, while the faint harmonics died upon the ear, and then the shouting, the cheering, the frenzy of enthusiasm from every part of the house. . . . It was the fulfilment of her morning dream. . . . Ah, why should she not go ?

A sound of wheels upon the bridge shattered the vision and brought her back to facts. She glanced round for Rosa.

" For goodness' sake go and see about luncheon, here is Dr. Bergiest. Tell them to put on the blue service. And let us have preserved fruit between the courses. He likes those Oriental things, what do you call them ? . . . cumquats. And do change your frock for something pretty. Your brown velveteen. I hate that old black thing you always wear."

Rosa seemed untouched by Anna's solicitude.

"I didn't know that you considered the brown dress pretty, or that you hated this. You don't, as a rule, take any interest in my clothes."

"Nor even in my own! Who is there to see us at Schwoebber? But to-day we shall have a young man to luncheon, Heaven be praised, and so we must both look our best."

"That you should do so would meet all the exigencies of the case, I should think," was Rosa's calm answer, enunciated in clean-cut, almost ungenial tones, and she left the hall through the door of the Mahlsaal, at the same moment that the expected guest opened the door from the courtyard.

A bluster of wind and a whirl of snow rushed in with him, and the draught, before the door was shut again, sent leaping up the chimney long tongues of flame.

The new-comer wore a fur-lined coat, a soft hat, and seal-skin gloves. His intelligent eyes surveyed the world through rimless glasses. His brown moustache and small, pointed beard did not conceal a full-lipped mouth. Dropping his hat upon a side-table, he drew off his gloves as he advanced to kiss Anna's hand, and, at her invitation, took off his overcoat and laid it by his hat. Then he joined her on the hearth. He held his hands to the blaze, rubbed them together, and held them out again.

"It's frightfully cold driving," said he, "but you've got a famous fire here, and no mistake!"

"You met my husband?" Anna asked him. "He's gone shooting, as usual."

"Yes, I met him down by Shultz's cottage. I was on my way in to see the old woman. He seemed . . . but, of course, it's only my fancy . . ."

"How did he seem? What did you fancy?"

"Oh, nothing . . . only, generally he's so cordial . . . but to-day I really do think he would have been glad to go by without speaking. . . ."

"That's impossible, dear doctor! Not to-day of all days, for precisely this morning we had been talking about you . . . and he likes you so much . . . immensely . . . as we all do. Now listen, I want you to stay to luncheon with me and Rosa, will you? It would be very kind of you to cheer our solitude."

"Kind? . . . Then you don't know what it means to me to spend an hour with you, gnädige Frau. It's a green oasis in the week's desert, it's a bun to a starving schoolboy."

"That's very pretty!" Anna conceded, smiling. "And I understand it. For I, too, have lived in Arcady. I, too, was

young once, little as you may believe it! Rosa will be here directly. She is supervising the luncheon. She is, as you know, a very accomplished housewife."

Anna was sitting in a little arm-chair of gilt cane and white wood, her favourite seat, both because she could move it easily herself, and because it was so completely at variance with the heavy, feudal furniture of Schwoebber. Like herself, it was an alien, an exile from brighter times and places. She had pulled it up close to the fire, and Bergiest, looking about, found a carved wooden stool, and brought it over beside her. Through his short-sighted, keen eyes, he looked at her with particularity.

"Are you young? Are you old?" he queried. "I do not know. I have never considered the matter. In the presence of Perfection the question of years becomes irrelevant."

At which Anna laughed, amused and pleased, and answered gaily, "At least I'm old enough not to blush at such barefaced flattery! If you wish your compliments to awaken a becoming confusion, you must try them on Rosa. And you'll have an opportunity after luncheon, for I want you to have a talk with her. Just you two, alone. I fancy she is suffering . . . in mind . . . and that you could minister to her."

Here, said Anna to herself, was Bergiest's opportunity. Here, after months of doubt, was the way made plain, the ladder set against the heights he hoped to scale. All he had to do was to mount courageously.

But he did not appear to understand. His face clouded, and removing his glasses, he frowned at Anna for an instant from naked eyes, then replaced them, and looked at her with a sombre, savage expression.

"I wish, gnädige Frau, you could sometimes forget for an instant my *rôle* of professional man," he said morosely.

"And I wish, dear doctor, you could sometimes remember that timidity is not on all occasions the greatest virtue in a lover . . ."

She had no sooner made this innocent speech than an incredible thing happened. Bergiest jerked off his glasses, and she saw them fly wide on their ribbon. Then he was kneeling on the floor in front of her, he had seized her hands, he was calling her by her name, was saying incoherent things, was protesting with passion his devotion and his love.

Anna suffocated with the shock. That he, Bergiest, the village apothecary, who was sent for when a housemaid had a whitlowed finger, when an ostler had a fit of the cholic, should dare to make love to her, the Freifrau of Schwoebber! For,

in that moment of unexpected outrage, she was Ciriacy and noble to the last drop of her blood, there was nothing in her of Jew or of Tannenbaum. Her indignation was such that for an instant she could neither speak nor stir. Then she wrenched her hands away, and was on her feet, pushing back her chair so violently that it upset with a crash, and facing Bergiest, who had risen too. Her dark and blazing eyes told him all that her colourless lips still refused to say.

He, also, was pale with mortification, and too disconcerted to speak.

Meanwhile she sought palliatives, not for him, but for her own wounded dignity. He must be mad . . . or drunk . . . yes, probably he had been drinking . . . no man, in his senses, occupying Bergiest's position, would have ventured on an insult so gross . . . but whether he had been drinking or not, the best course for her to take was to suppose he had been drinking . . . it was best calculated to humiliate him. . . .

She immediately expressed the supposition in a voice of icy disdain, adding, "It is the only excuse I can think of for you. And now I will ring for your trap. Would you like one of the men to drive you home?"

Still silent and still pale, Bergiest was getting back his usual cynical phlegm. He replaced his glasses, took them off to polish them lightly with his handkerchief, and put them on once more. Then he said, "No. I'm not drunk, but . . . I've made a blunder, and a blunder, as we all know, is much less forgivable than a crime. For, had it been as I hoped . . . but my hopes blinded me. One always sees in life just what one sets out to see. . . . There remains nothing for me to do but to ask your forgiveness very humbly and to go." He moved to the table where his hat and coat were lying.

Anna said rageously to herself that his manner was not humble at all, scarcely penitent, and she found even a note of irony in it when he added, "Unless you would wish me first, perhaps, to prescribe for your maid . . . in the kitchen?"

She would have liked to box his ears, to turn him out of Schwoebber, never to see his face, to hear his name again. And she stood hesitating, counting up the inevitable cost. That cost was heavy. To quarrel with the only doctor in Dorfheim, the only doctor within a ten-mile radius, was a serious item of it. Then, the reasons for such a quarrel would have to be explained to Boris, which would be unpleasant, and might lead to worse complications, Boris was so hot-headed and absurd. Then again, there was Rosa . . . she remembered all her morning schemes

for the girl . . . was Rosa to be sacrificed and her last chance of settling in life lost to her, because of Bergiest's folly and Anna's pride? She saw she must abandon an irreconcilable attitude, the price was too high.

To gain time she walked from him towards the windows at the far end of the hall, meditating on what she had better do and say. Having got half-way she turned and came back to where he stood waiting to be dismissed.

"I could not forgive your conduct if I thought it over, but I will do my best to forget it. You must take means to help me to forget. I am willing to believe it was the madness of a moment . . . of hot blood, let us say . . .

"Dr. Bergiest, let us talk sensibly," and she looked at him with a little smile to prove she was relenting. "Let us talk like old friends, and we really have known each other now quite a long time. Come here and sit down. Now tell me, why don't you get married? It would be better for you in every way, believe me, if you were to get married."

He, stroking his beard, answered her, again faintly ironical, "The gnädige Frau is very kind to interest herself in my welfare. And no doubt she is right. My mother tells me continually the same thing. But marriageable young ladies are not exactly plentiful in Dorfheim. I might, of course, make an honest woman of the inn-keeper's daughter, who, they tell me, has got into trouble again . . . or there is the Pfarrer's sister, fifty, and stone deaf . . . otherwise, I don't really see . . ."

Anna interrupted, "The girl I wish for you is a good, nice girl, of distinction, family, culture, and with a reasonable dot."

"Ah, one's wishes! Will-o'-the-wisps, mirages, false lights that dance one down to death. No, I've indulged in illusion too long . . ."

Anna shut her ears to the innuendo.

"One can be blind, also, to the light that saves? In turning one's back upon illusion, one may sometimes turn it on realities? The wife I wish for you is close at hand. I wonder you have not discovered her for yourself," she paused a moment, watching his face, "in Rosa Ament."

But his surprise was evidently genuine.

"In Fräulein Rosa?" he repeated. "Never! Assuredly such an idea has never entered my head."

"It would be so suitable, so advantageous a match, that it seemed to me you must have thought of it . . . a girl whose worth you know, whose family you can appreciate. Rosa, through her mother, can claim her sixteen quarterings, but she

makes no pretensions, she is a simple, good girl, an excellent cook, economical, fond of work. . . . It is we who should suffer from her loss. But where your happiness is concerned, see how unselfish I am ! . . . Rosa is thoroughly adapted to make a man happy, and my husband is prepared to give her a very generous dot, he was saying so only this morning. He mentioned fifty thousand marks," concluded Anna with diplomatic mendaciousness, and wondered where in the world Ciriacy would find it.

Bergiest, holding his glasses between finger and thumb, tapped their edge lightly against his strong white teeth while he contemplated Anna from sagacious eyes.

" You surprise me very much," said he, when she ceased speaking. " If I had ever thought of the matter at all, I should have doubted my chance of pleasing you and the Herr Baron as a suitor for his cousin. You mean to say it *would* please you ? "

" It is not my pleasure but your own interests which I am putting before you," declared Anna with dignity.

" Of course ! . . . Of course, I see that from a business point of view it is very much to my interest . . . a doctor inspires greater confidence once he is married. . . . But really . . . this notion of Fräulein Rosa . . . How do you think, gnädige Frau, the idea would strike Fräulein Rosa herself ? "

" Ah, there you are a thousand times more lucky than you deserve. For I'm not sure that any man deserves the love of a good woman, and Rosa is in love with you. No, don't protest ! On that point I know I am right. I've seen it, I've felt it for long."

Bergiest, fingering his beard, concealed a silent laugh of gratification. It would not have surprised him to learn that Lotte as well as Rosa, and every other woman in the castle had an infatuation for him. The sharpest surprise of his life had been the one inflicted on him that afternoon by Anna in proving she had none. But already he was telling himself that she had protested overmuch. Had she not been conscious of a certain partiality for him at the bottom of her heart, she would never have been so angry. At the same time he was entirely sceptical as to Anna's reasoning powers, and her accuracy of deduction.

" This is a day of extraordinary happenings," said he, " but all the same I find it difficult to believe . . . you may be mistaken . . . suppose Fräulein Rosa is . . . does not . . ."

Anna had recovered her serenity, and Bergiest was completely forgiven.

"Oh, I'll permit you to tremble a little," she told him smiling. "A proper sense of his demerits combined with a determination to put his fate to the touch, is very commendable in a wooer. But before you leave us this evening I shall expect you to acknowledge me a reader of the human heart, a Sybil, a Seer!"

It was afternoon. Luncheon had passed off well. Anna had kept the conversation on the impersonal plane of Art. She had discussed the extraordinary quality of Romain Rolland's work, "through which life rushes like a river, beautiful, turbulent, and profound," Remy de Gourmont's cynicism, and the newspaper stories of Hirsch. Bergiest had followed where she had led.

Meanwhile Rosa, her head drooping a little as if from the weight of her ruddy crown, had sat silent unless spoken to. Then, in her clear, unsympathetic voice, she had denied all knowledge of French literature more modern than Télémaque and La Fontaine. Bergiest was pleased by this . . . his wife must have nothing to do with French fiction . . . and examining the girl from an appreciative standpoint, he discovered her to be rather charming, to own a beautiful healthy skin, teeth white as his own, a satisfactory bust and hips . . .

Now he was having his interview with her alone in the green drawing-room, and Anna was awaiting its conclusion in the hall. On the table lay Rosa's ball of cotton and steel hook. To pass the time, Anna took them up, and began to crochet with skilful twinkling fingers. In spite of herself her thoughts reverted to Bergiest's unwelcome declaration. For a moment she felt fresh annoyance, then only amusement. Men seemed to her amazing creatures . . . impetuous, irresponsible, devoid of any guiding principle as children. . . . But how much more amazing that women should believe in them so implicitly. Two further proofs of woman's sublime credulity had come to Anna's notice that morning. While dressing her mistress, Lotte had broken cautiously to her the news that she, Lotte, was going to marry Hempel . . . if the gnädige Frau would give her permission?

"So that is why you are content to end your days in Schwoebber?" Anna had told her. "Now I understand." But in her heart she felt sore that Lotte's chief interest in life no longer centered in her alone.

The other bit of news was that Doerchen had given notice, as she was going out to the United States next month to be married to her sweetheart. If Lotte's proposed change of life

had seemed strange to Anna, it was simply incredible that a poor, ignorant girl like Doerchen should be ready to undertake a sea-voyage to a foreign country, without knowing one word of the language, at the invitation of a man whom she had not seen for years.

Yet Anna remembered that she had done as much herself, more indeed, when she had given up art, freedom, Vienna, everything for the sake of Ciriacy, and had not even realised it as a sacrifice at the time. "At the time," she mused. . . . "Ah, Love is a wonderful magician. . . . If only his spells could endure. . . ."

Her thoughts turned to Rosa. She pictured her married, a smiling Hausfrau, living in the pleasant white Bergiest house, close at hand in the village of Dorfheim. It would be a distraction to walk over and visit her there. And Rosa would always be placid, contented, unemotional, devoted to her husband's comforts, and the practical side of life. She was exactly the wife Bergiest required. Anna was more convinced than usual that she had done well in persuading Boris to offer a home to his penniless, orphan cousin. In the beginning he had been averse to introduce a third person into their intimate life *à deux*. But she had overcome his reluctance, and she felt much warm self-approval, both for her conduct then, and for the excellent *parti* she was able to provide Rosa with now. For Bergiest was really an excellent fellow. She would not allow his momentary folly to shake her old-established good opinion of him.

She continued to loop and knot her thread with mechanical industry, until the drawing-room door opened, and she looked up to see the young man coming towards her.

She questioned "Well?" pleasurably prepared to have her anticipations confirmed. And as he made no answer, "Well?" she asked again, but this time in surprise.

She thought that he looked at her in the oddest fashion. His face was an enigma to which the clue was wanting. Then he laughed, but his laugh expressed everything save mirth and geniality.

"I beg your pardon!" said he, seeing the wonder in her eyes. "But I laugh at the irony of circumstances. I laugh as I look through the veil of illusion which Maya weaves before us all. I laugh at your blindness and at mine."

"At my blindness?"

"Yes. For instance . . . did you not think Fräulein Rosa in love with me?"

"I am sure that she is!" asserted Anna bravely.

"She is as indifferent to me as I . . . as is the gnädige Frau herself. If you could have seen her distress! . . ."

To Anna his own distress seemed curious, considering that, up to half an hour ago, he had never, on his own showing, given Rosa a thought.

He took a turn through the hall, came back, and settling his glasses afresh looked Anna straight in the eyes.

"Life's too strange!" said he. "This is beyond everything."

"Do you mean that Rosa has refused you?" she cried.

"Emphatically refused me. Uncompromisingly!"

Anna declared with eagerness, "Oh, but that's impossible! You must never take a girl's 'no' as final. They say 'no' from perversity, from coyness. . . ."

"Fräulein Rosa is not a quite young girl, gnädige Frau, . . . and yet, were she a very few years older, I imagine she would have given me a different answer," was Bergiest's cryptic remark. "I must consider myself fortunate that she is still lacking in worldly wisdom."

But Anna did not heed him, in the pursuit of her own ideas. "She only wants a little warmer persuasion from you, a little friendly coercion from me. . . . Where is she now?"

"She left me ten minutes ago. She went away through the billiard-room."

"Then wait here, I will go and speak to her."

Anna rose, but Bergiest laid a detaining hand upon her arm. The familiarity surprised her, yet there was something so much more surprising in his expression that she was too bewildered to show resentment. She even felt intimidated when he told her, violently, "You must do nothing of the sort! Nothing would induce me to marry Fräulein Rosa now, not even the desire to please you. And she wants it still less than I do. But we will talk of this again another time. The situation is so surprising . . . terrible even . . . I must envisage it from a little distance. . . . May I ring for my trap?"

He bade Anna good-bye, and accompanied the servant into the courtyard to superintend the preparations. The dusk was closing in. The corners of the yard were thick with shadows. The snow still fell as it had fallen all day. The white landscape visible through the entrance-arch formed a lighter background to Bergiest's figure as he paced to and fro over the stones.

Anna watched him from a window. Her mind swayed in a vague disquietude, the disquietude which overwhelms one when

suddenly plunged into a stream of events and emotions of which one cannot sound the depths, nor understand the drift.

Bergiest had just swung himself up into the high cart, and had gathered the reins in his hands, when a man, shouting something Anna did not hear, came running in from the bridge. Bergiest leaned down to speak with him.

Anna thought she recognised *der dicke* Peter, one of the village lads, and wondered idly what he wanted.

Then, to her surprise, Bergiest had leapt from the cart, and was himself running in the direction from which the boy had come.

The next moment all the stable hands, all the servants were gathered round Peter, who held the mare's head, and a contagious excitement seemed to pass from one to another.

Mam'zelle, with a red shawl over her head, appeared from a side-door, and Peter, relinquishing the bridle to an ostler, recommenced his narration to Lotte with many gesticulations.

She left him abruptly and came hurrying towards the hall.

Anna, curiously perturbed, advanced to meet her, holding open the door. To her astonishment the woman took her in her arms, calling her "*Aennchen*" ("My little Anna"), as she used to do sometimes in the old Vienna days, but had not once permitted herself during the ten years of Frau von Ciriacy's married life.

"But what is it, Lotte? Tell me!" murmured Anna, awe-struck.

"It is the Herr Baron, my poor child, he is hurt, they are bringing him home."

Looking over Lotte's shoulder through the wide-open door, Anna saw advancing a cluster of men, who carried in their midst a dark Something on a shutter, shoulder high. Bergiest preceded them.

He announced to Anna in grave, commiserating tones, "Ciriacy has had an accident with his gun. I fear it is very serious." He was again the cool, professional man. "Clear the table here," he ordered. "Light up, bring plenty of lights."

Looking back upon the same scene afterwards, Anna could never recall the precise sequence of events. She saw everything confused and blurred. The bearers had laid their burden down upon the table. Bergiest had busied himself with remedies no longer needful, the whole household had collected in the hall. But the only figure which stood out in her memory was the figure of Hempel, who had told the story of the day in a voice which every now and again thickened and broke with emotion.

"The Herr Baron was very gay and talkative coming home, although when we started this morning he seemed a bit out of spirits. But he cheered up the moment he had shot the fox here, said that the gnädige Frau would be pleased and her carpet would now be complete. And we made a good bag of other game as well, and when we reached the Bergweg, he decided to take the short cut home across the plantation as it was already late, and he put his hand on the wall to jump it, as he had done a thousand times before, and the gun caught in the brushwood and went off, because the lock slipped very easily, the Herr Baron having oiled it in the morning, and 'My God, Karl!' he said, 'I've done for myself at last!' Those were just his very words, 'My God, Karl, I've done for myself at last!' And then, when I was kneeling beside him, he made a great effort to speak. . . . 'Say to her . . . say to her . . .' but that was all I could catch and what he wanted me to tell the gnädige . . . the gnädige Frau, I do not know. And it was Kaiser that went and fetched Peter Shultz, who was passing along the road below, and we took the door off the tool-house of the lodge, and Peter and the Breitkopfs and I together, we carried him home."

The whole time that Hempel spoke big tears rolled down his face, and he stroked automatically the fur of a fine fox which was hung across his arm. The creature's splendid bushy tail swept the floor, but his eyes were filmed in death, his body was stiffening, and from the little hole above his heart the blood had ceased to flow.

Over the gateway of the north wing of Schwoebber were the rooms of Boris von Ciriacy. Here were no carpets on the floors, the furniture was of the simplest kind, before the windows no curtains hung. It had been his pleasure to have none. Sunrise could never awaken him too soon.

Now the yellow light of six tall wax candles, which had been brought up from the chapel and ranged upon the bureau, showed the snow pressing from without against the window-panes, intensified the blackness of the night beyond, and illuminated a motionless form stretched upon the low and narrow bed.

Although the cold was so bitter that the stone walls behind the ragged tapestries breathed forth a chilly breath, the form was covered only by a sheet, and the fire in the stove had been permitted to expire.

Whenever Anna entered the room, her blood seemed to

freeze in her veins. She could only endure the low temperature for a very few minutes at a time. Yet she could not long remain away. No sooner was she back in her warm comfortable *appartement* than absolute incredulity of the day's tragedy again laid hold of her, and that which her reason told her to be true became to her imagination unthinkable, impossible.

She could not rest. If she sat down it was to rise again, if she took up a book it was to turn the pages without even trying to seize a word.

Her thoughts were with Boris . . . he was in his room . . . she would go and bid him good night. For many months, until to-night, she had not visited his rooms, and their bleak uncared-for aspect pricked her conscience. To-morrow she would give orders to have them rearranged. The Persian carpet could well be spared from the green drawing-room, since she never sat there. The Indian cabinet from her boudoir would fill up the bare space between the windows . . . its black wood and barbaric carvings were quite out of harmony with the delicate setting of a boudoir . . . but Boris would find it useful for storing his fishing-flies, his cartridges, his powder and shot. Poor Boris. She had not always been patient with him, or kind. . . . Well! For the future . . .

For the future?

It was late. Lotte had settled her among the lace pillows, had drawn the satin coverlet up to her chin, had told her to sleep, as one tells a little child, and had left her at last. The whole household had gone to rest. There was not a sound in the castle, nor a sound without, where the unceasing snow-fall muffled all noise.

But for Anna rest was impossible. She felt the desire to make again the terrible journey she had made so many times before, that journey which ended always in a half-second's irresolute pause outside Ciriacy's door, when, with her hand upon the latch, she would summon up all her courage to enter. Always her feet loitered, her heart beat quicker as she drew near the goal, and memory of what she had already seen came back to scatter the illusory visions that swayed her so powerfully while still at a distance.

For twenty minutes, for half an hour, Anna struggled with herself. Then she could resist no longer. She got up, slipped her feet into fur-lined slippers, wrapped a silken fur-lined gown about her, and carrying a silver lamp in her hand, set out.

Her way lay first along the corridor of the south wing with

its tall, slim, undraped windows, that looked out upon the snow-cumbered courtyard, then through the great Rittersaal with its portraits of dead and gone Ciriacys, with its suits of armour, gleaming pale momentary ghosts, as the lamplight struck them and passed by, into the bare corridor of the north wing, upon which opened Boso's rooms.

She trembled with cold and with fear. She was afraid of the darkness and solitude, she was afraid of spectres and of mice. Ah, to feel again the unfamiliar pressure of Boso's protective arm! She paused hesitant at his door with her hand upon the latch, when suddenly her heart sprang up in her bosom, and stood still. For, from the inner room where It lay, she heard him speaking . . . some one speaking. . . . With the courage of a supreme terror she turned the handle and went in, crossing the outer room, which was almost in darkness, to where the lighted candles burned, and revealed to her relief . . . and great surprise . . . Rosa Ament kneeling on the floor, her head pressed against the bed.

It was Rosa Ament who spoke, and she was saying over and over again in agonising tones of entreaty, "Darling, come back to me! Come back to me, darling! Darling, come back!"

To the iteration, to the passionate intensity of this plea only dead ears could have remained deaf, only dead lips could have remained dumb. It cut through Anna's soul with a sharp pain, and for the first time she apprehended dimly the heights and depths of suffering.

But she called to the girl in a low tone, and Rosa, treading into the long brown velvet frock, stumbled to her feet and turned round.

Subconsciously Anna noted that though it was one o'clock inthe morning, Rosa had changed nothing in her dress since luncheon, her hair even had not been undone. But its vitality and crinkle, even its colour had gone out of it, it looked tired, limp, and drab.

From the darkness about the girl's feet, the darker form of Kaiser detached itself. The dog looked at Anna with a deprecating eye before he slunk away beneath the bed, but she did not observe him.

For the light of the lamp she held falling on Rosa's face, showed in it an extraordinary alteration. All its white and pinkness, its rounded contours, its youthfulness, were gone. It was become ashen, haggard, *old*-looking. But its insignificance was gone too, it was now extraordinarily individual and significant. It seemed to Anna as though, hitherto, Rosa had worn a mask of

wax, behind which, during many months and years, the real face, the real character, had been forming, and that to-day suddenly the mask had been torn away. And on this new face was written some strange and troubling message, as she stood and stared at Anna from tear-drenched eyes.

"Why are you not in bed?" Anna asked her. "What are you doing here?"

Rosa answered slowly, searching for her words, as though she had forgotten all other phrases save those of grief, "I kept away the whole time . . . although I loved him . . . for eight whole hours I have kept away . . . it is my turn now."

"You loved him, yes, he was your cousin, he was good to you. But all the same you must not stay." And then, in response to that most troubling look in Rosa's eyes, she added, "No one has any right to be here but I, his wife."

The other came a step nearer to Anna, and said deliberately, "But you did not love him as I loved him."

A wave of angry blood rushed to Anna's pale face, and at the same time a horrible, a bewildering fear began to knock at her heart.

"What are you saying, Rosa Ament?"

She spoke in a low tone, out of that curious reverence we have for the dead, whom no tones of ours, however jarring, will ever vex again, and Rosa's answers were given in the same subdued way.

"You dare to tell me that I did not love my husband as you loved him? But do you know that what you are saying is atrociously wicked? You must be mad!"

Rosa's mouth quivered, her hands trembled, but her eyes continued to hold Anna's courageously, as she came nearer still.

"Yes, you are the wife by law, but which of us is the real wife? Which of us two gave him love and service in his life . . . and in his death? Who to-day undressed him? Who washed him? Who clothed him again for the grave? You do not know? But at least you know that it was not you. You left these last most sacred duties to your servants, and whether it was your housekeeper, Karl Hempel, or one of the girls who fulfilled them, you do not know, you have not cared to inquire. Your maid tells you that everything requisite has been done, that you are not to trouble, and you are only too glad to be spared, For it is true you did not love him, true, true!

"The legal wife, yes . . . but that only. It is I who am the real wife! And so it was I who, with Frau Müller, did

what was necessary. But she merely stood by and directed me, for I let no hand touch him but mine."

Rosa's voice was metamorphosed like all else about her. It was become rich and deep, it spilled over with emotions, it thrilled Anna to the recesses of her being, and prevented speech.

"Ah, do you question which of us two is the real wife? I, who worshipped him with every fibre of my body, with every feeling of my soul, I, for whom his mere presence in the same room was Heaven, for whom to hear him speak, to touch a thing which he had touched, turned the whole day to gold . . . or you, who despised him? Yes," she repeated with hushed violence, "you despised him! Every one knew it. Every one in the house knew it. Because he didn't care for books, didn't understand music, you thought him immeasurably below you. You never wanted to be with him. You hated Schwoebber and your life here, and all his interests and pursuits.

"You would never sing to him, although your singing gave him so much pleasure. When I first came, he used to tell me about your beautiful voice, and how much he liked to listen to it. But latterly you didn't think he was worth singing to. You wanted an audience, people to applaud you. He knew quite well how much you regretted Vienna, and the theatre, and your successes there.

"You let him come and live in these cold, miserable rooms, because you pretended he smelled of the stables, because you hated to have poor Kaiser, whom he was so fond of, in your part of the house.

"You encouraged him to do without you, to live apart from you. How often have I not heard you tell him that he bored you, that the sound of his voice got on your nerves, that he had better go and talk to Karl!

"And you ask me how I dare to say that I loved him best? I dare, because it is the truth, and the wonder rather is, that you, who did none of a wife's duties, should dare to claim a wife's rights!

"But with his death your rights are ended. Mine begin, and they will grow stronger every hour that I live. For the immortal part of him is mine; I am the mother of his child. Before your first mourning is shabby, I shall be suffering the anguish of labour because of my love for him. But I shall find him again in the child, I shall look into his eyes again, his voice again will caress me." Her own grew husky and very tender. "He was always good to me, sweet, unselfish. . . . He told me this morning your plans respecting Bergiest, and I

was on the point of telling him my happy news when you interrupted us. He is dead without having had that immense joy. . . . And to-day, for the first time, he went away without kissing me, and now I shall never, never know his kisses any more. . . ."

The agony of her loss returned. She forgot Anna and the whole world. She threw herself again upon her knees by the bedside, and her hopeless supplication began anew.

"Darling, speak to me! Speak to me, darling! One word, one little word, only one little word!"

Confronted with this immense, with this immedicable grief, Anna, in silence, relinquished every right.

Back in her own room she lay long among her pillows, tearless, wide-eyed, unable as yet to suffer, unable even to think. For Rosa's voice hung at her ear, accusatory, condemnatory, it seemed to traverse the long corridors, to pierce the massive walls, to rise from the moat, to sweep through the leafless trees.

"It is true you did not love him . . . true . . . true!"

But was it true?

Now that it was too late, now that it no longer mattered, now that the chance of telling him was lost to her for ever, Anna convinced herself that it was not true.

Morning had come again before she found in slumber an impermanent peace, and outside Schwoebber the snow had ceased to fall.

Morning had come. The sky lightened, and the curtain of blue-grey cloud drawn flat against the east was suddenly irradiated by the foreglow. It ribbed and freckled from edge to edge, first with faint, and then with vivid rose. This faded, and there followed a long, long pause.

A series of colour-changes passed over the sky. In the cool north-west reigned blue and white daylight, while the eastern cloud-curtain assumed a warm and uniform cinnamon hue. It lifted a little to reveal a translucent amber sea into which there kept rising, faster and more fast, isles and islets of living gold.

All at once the chitter of sparrow and starling broke out, and the yokel, plodding across the grey farm-yard, stood with arrested eyes to greet the great and glorious Sun, who, thrusting his shoulder up over the vacant, snow-clad fields, began to pour down, once more, life and joy upon the earth.

The Wife of Altamont

By Violet Hunt

XV

Mrs. Altamont sat in the great red omnibus going back to Town, and wondered what she had done? She was on her way home at least; she gloated on the thought of her last quiet evening in her own quiet house. For had she let loose the Furies? Had she done something, mad, foolish, and Scriptural, a Christian act of the extremest foolishest charity. She felt now as one who has received extreme unction, somewhat bemused and yet equable. She was like those persons who give seldom to offertories or subscription lists, but when they do give, give copiously. She seemed as if she had just attended a long and unwieldy church service—to have once for all penetrated to the very core of philanthropy, and she was tired to death!

Yet she could have done no less. It had been, now that she came to disentangle motives, the sight of Little Katie which had so affected her and moved her to benevolence; Little Katie, who couldn't grow, who wasn't going to live, she felt sure of it, not even though they should begin feeding her well from now! . . .

Well, to carry on the religious metaphor, she had had her call, and she had responded to it. She was glad, she was changed, invigorated, uplifted, not with pride, but the pleasure of Doing, for once. This was Living indeed—squalid, utilitarian, grotesque, but still, Living.

She began to plan to make up her old winter jacket for Ada Cox, and there were some of Wilfrid's baby clothes that his mother had put aside long ago which might do for the children! In her mind, the scissors flew hither and thither—she heard the tearing of stuff. . . .

Later on, when the tram turned her out in Victoria Street, and the region grew less slummy, she began to think of Ernest Veere, and wonder if he would be pleased with her or no.

But Veere was not pleased, he thought the arrangement absurd. He used the time-honoured fetish word, quixotic, in this connection, and was vexed with Betsey for disdaining his proffered pecuniary assistance for Mrs. Cox. She tried to explain to him how she felt about it. In vain. His utilitarian negation of the picturesque as a factor in human affairs made him blind and deaf to her reasons for her action, and they were, though she did not realise it, the purely sentimental.

Mrs. Altamont could not deny that Ada Cox, so far, proved to be no cook. That was Ernest Veere's opportunity, eagerly grasped at. He wasn't going to have his beautiful friend starve and grow thin, at all events! He insisted on taking her out to dinner nearly every night during the month that elapsed before Altamont mended and was able to be brought to the court to stand his trial.

It was over at last. Two days of squalid recapitulation of horrid details, a hint of female influence, quashed at once, and then the verdict. At the Vienna Café, at the top of Leicester Square, where Veere brought Betsey to dine two days after the trial, she might, while she waited for him, read the questions of counsel, the judge's summing up, and the verdict. Furthermore, poor Miss Altamont's disgraceful history in full, the sin of Sir Joris's youth lightly adumbrated. It was all there, in *The Sweep*. As for the bare facts of the case, she had no need to read them up, for Inspector Whortlebury made it his business to keep her informed. She had not been asked to appear, the Veeres' solicitor, through Rose's intercession, had made that all easy for her. She was supposed naturally to be ill.

That was why she met him at obscure places like this. When he had been too busy to motor out to fetch her, she got there first and waited for him.

On the white tablecloth beside her lay one or two of the daily papers, mounted on wooden frames for reading, like horn books of old. The large catchy headlines of *The Sweep* caught her eye. She was able to read there "The Convict Altamont," and "The Condemned Man's Health," while "Altamont in Prison" stared at her from another sheet.

She could not have asked the waiter to remove them if she had been inclined, for it might have attracted attention to herself, and revealed her identity, which she had taken the greatest pains, short of positively cloistering herself, to conceal. Besides, she did not care much, she had grown used to the impact of the shocks dealt her by sensation-mongers on placards and

posters. There was, indeed, only one form of headline that she had, from the peculiarities of the case, been spared, "Strange Development." Wilfrid's counsel naturally was debarred from that line of defence—there *could* be nothing new. His solicitor, paid for by Rose Veere, had she but known, was trying to bring him off on the plea of insanity; his wife had been questioned, but she had not chosen to contribute anything to the theory. No, Wilfrid, to her knowledge, had never been strange in manner, or done anything particularly perverse until now. She knew of nothing, and the removal of the other witness, his mother, by death, had left her the sole depository of the previous facts of his life. Ada Cox had not even been called.

The waiter removed the papers; a client wanted them. A man behind her was even then hanging up his hat, he came round the corner of the coat-stand to their table! It was Veere, who smiled, as he always did when he saw Betsey again. The waiter hovered over him as he sat down:

"Two dozen oysters. Poulet Paprika. Pommes Sautées. Omelette au Rhum—or will you have Kirsch? For two. And bring the wine card, please."

"How are you?" he addressed himself to her. "Why wouldn't you come out with me yesterday?"

"Because of Ada."

"Your cook?" scornfully.

"Yes," she smiled, "and a bad one at that."

He interrupted her. "One minute! Champagne?"

"No, not to-day."

"Oh yes, do you good. I want some." He pointed to a number on the card. "A pint of that." The man departed. "Now! Do you mean that Ada took it conventionally?"

"Well, the morning of the day on which you get the news of your husband's condemnation—! He was *my* husband, of course, but she's the one that feels it. She couldn't, really, do a single thing all day—headache—sat in a corner with her apron over her head, woman-of-the-people fashion. I had to cook the dinner, and mind the children. Little Wilfrid, of course, chose the occasion to be more uproarious than usual. It took me all my time to keep him out of the copper. Georgie had come in to do some washing for me. Domestic detail! So you see, it would not have been possible for me to come, even if I had wanted!"

"Didn't you want?"

"No, I think not. I'm not a monster. It would have seemed too callous. But I don't pretend that I want him to get off. Ada, of course, does."

"I suppose he was fairly kind to her?"

"He doesn't seem to have knocked her about. She's got no marks, anyway."

"You have?"

"Oh, the usual scar. It was my own fault. You see I've got a tongue, unfortunately, and I let Wilfrid have it pretty hot sometimes. Ada noticed the cut the other day."

"And did you tell her who gave it you?"

"No. Poor old Ginger gets the credit of it. But I'm not sure she believed me. She's quiet, but she's got a lot of elementary wisdom and a sort of doggy instinct that goes right, sometimes. She's rather jealous of me still. She is always trying to find out if Wilfrid and I got on together, and when I do my best to let her understand that she was his first and only love, she resents it on his account, and implies that I neglected my wifely duties."

"You did, thank God! And sent him to her, an inferior article. She or her like was his true mate. They were probably very happy together. If she had had enough money to run the show, he would have stayed at home, lived on her, and let my uncle alone. She knew how to manage him. Why wasn't she tied to him instead of you? That's the irony—the pity of it! Why weren't you like her—and she Altamont's widow?"

"You wouldn't have cared to be my friend then."

"On the contrary, I'd have married you—if you'd only been his mistress, instead of his wife. That's another thing, and fatal!"

It was not Betsey's way to check and annoy him in the full flush of his charming arrogance and egoism by representing to him the possibility of a difference of opinion. She let him take it for granted that she would have accepted his offer if he had seen his way to make it. The thing could never be put to the test, as he said. And she had plans. She wanted to keep him in a good humour. Wilfrid was as good as dead. The plea of insanity which was his only line of defence had failed. His wife, and only his wife, could have substantiated it; and she had refused, tacitly, to lie to save his life. She showed Veere the trend of her thoughts by her question.

"Don't you think that if the relations of a criminal help the lawyers to trump up the plea of insanity and invent all sorts of strange, mad things that he has done in the past to save him, that, when they succeed in proving it, they should be liable to prosecution?"

"How so?"

"Because if they do get him off that way they establish the fact that they were all the time harbouring a madman, and should have had him examined and shut up before he did any mischief!"

"I certainly agree with you. It's a good point. Many more people would get hanged, though, and Broadmoor would be emptied. Well, where shall we go to-night? There's a splendid play at the Shaftesbury— Oh, I forgot!"

"No, let's go to it, I have no feeling of that kind."

"All right. I'll go and pay."

She dropped an enormous veil with large velvety spots over the features she was interested in hiding from the British Public. It would interfere with her plans should her face become public property. Neither was it good for Veere to be seen too much about with her. They went to the pit of the theatre.

Since her husband's definite condemnation, Betsey, confronted with the greatest issues of her life, looked them full in the face, and formed a distinct plan of action. She meant to tell this young man, who had elected himself to be her friend, and beg for his co-operation. He was the dearest boy in the world, the cleverest, the most generous, a young man with a future, though he was consecrating the present to her, the wife of a condemned murderer, and a woman older than himself. But not for long now. To-night after the play and supper he would motor her back and she would tell him what she meant to do.

She had no fear of him. She dreaded no cheaply audacious enterprises on his part. Yet she knew well enough that he admired her deeply. She would not have cared to be with him otherwise, she could not have confided so thoroughly in a man who did not desire her as a woman. He probably was not entirely proof against the subtle whet of sex, though no man could show himself less prone to the vulgar trivialities of flirtation. Against the big gun and forceful batteries of passion, her want of any deep feeling for him made her safe, and he would use no other. A queer, deep, concentrated nature his, though outwardly easy-going, negligent and trivial. So she thought of him in the comparatively brief moments devoted by her to the consideration of his character. She was, for the moment, full of sidelights on *The Lyons Mail.*

"This *is* an old-fashioned play! Murderers don't seem to get found out now like that. There's no poetic justice in real life."

"Because miscreants have learned not to give themselves

away. They avoid committing that one little bit of idiocy that makes the whole world kin and themselves discovered. They don't neglect the smaller precautions—I suppose it's the result of the capital Board School training we give them ? "

" Yes ; we teach them to criticise the Bible and to join their flats, and then when they are old they do not depart from it. Do you think Wilfrid meant to shoot your uncle ? "

" He took his pistols out with him, didn't he ? Were they new ? "

" Had them years ! I missed them, and at first it worried me, and I didn't tell Miss Altamont. Then I made up my mind that he had taken them out of bravado, he meant to threaten—a man armed is always more persuasive. I'll tell you what I think. No one heard exactly what they said to each other, but my idea is, he begged for money."

" You said so in court."

" And threatened to blow out his own brains if he was refused. Sir Joris was a brave man ; I expect he first shrugged his shoulders and suggested a strait-waistcoat. That would infuriate Wilfrid and suggest to him a change of plan. It drove him mad, in fact, and he pulled the trigger at Sir Joris. The shooting at himself after was pure remorse."

" My dear friend, aren't you rather morbid ? "

" No, the opposite of morbid—healthy. Death isn't so terrible to perfectly well people."

" A good digestion, in fact, can deal even with a horrible murder and make it into chyle."

" Well, I do think it's physical weakness makes one shrink so from the idea of death—one's own or other people's. If a cook wasn't healthy she'd loathe—or enjoy too much—drawing a turkey. Animals can go on feeding, cropping grass beside a comrade that's dying under the most disgusting conditions——"

" I've seen Dobrée once, staying at my uncle's, jab at a hunted otter with her parasol and spoil its nose—add to its last grunting agonies ! I've seen her. Yes, I've seen her."

" She has no imagination, I suppose ? "

" No more have I, but I couldn't stand that. I didn't say any more to the girl all day. . . . She's up there, now, in a box ! Do you see ? "

" How like you to keep it dark all through the first act ! Has she seen us—you, I mean ? " she whispered excitedly.

" I shouldn't think so. She would never look for me here in the pit ! "

" No, no, of course not ! " she said sarcastically. After a

moment's deliberation—" I see her quite well. She's not so pretty as I thought. She's steely."

" Say aluminium ! Rather good ! "

" I'm disappointed in her, any way. She's the sort of woman I'd have expected to be soft, and sweet—born in the purple as she is ! "

" If the purple isn't lined with ermine it's no good. The Angernounes are hard up ! "

" What do you call hard up ? "

" Paupers at two thousand a year. But old Angernoune's got a big estate to keep up."

" Why should he keep it up ? Let him cut it up into small holdings."

" And the ancestral mansion, that James the Fourth slept in on the night before Flodden ? "

" Make it into a museum ! "

XVI

" Oh, do give me something to give that poor child ! " she begged as they came out of the theatre, and were at once beset by a shivering specimen of organised London misery.

" I will not. You should never give in the street."

" Oh, but it's genuine. Look ! He doesn't even beg."

" Best draw of all ! Do come on, dear."

" All right ! " She hastily slipped her fine scarf that he had given her from her neck and wound it deftly round that of the boy, flashing back her pretty defiance of the questioner of the morality of charity. He only smiled.

" It won't matter. I'm not a bit hurt. Though why you should disregard *me* on the subject—I was my uncle's almoner !—I dispensed his charities ! "

Crossing the strip of pavement on their way to the motor they passed the series of wet posters laid in the mud with stones apposed at all four corners to keep them down. The chief item of news was " Altamont's Letter to His Wife ! "

" Yes," said she, " that came just before I started. Ada's got it now, wearing it next her poor heart."

" How could you let her ? "

" She wanted it. She didn't see through it. It's just conventional—dictated by the prison chaplain, I should think."

" Well, you *are* a queer mixture ! " he said, regarding her half kindly, half cynically. They were rolling along now smoothly towards Wimbledon.

"How am I?"

"Full of misplaced charity and whimsical hardnesses."

"Look here!" She turned to him solemnly. "You like me to be natural, you encourage me to talk quite freely to you. But if I had to fag to sham sensibility, I tell you, I wouldn't be with you in these days at all! I would refuse myself to you as I do to the others, the Wimbledonians. They all come bothering—one after another, and I hear that they are all down on me now because I go about with you and won't let them see how I am bearing it. I am bearing it too well, I know. It's indecent. I'm supposed to be broken with shame and grief. But why should I be bowed down with shame for the act of a man in whom I have no part, with whose doings I am not in any way connected, just because I once was fool enough to go and have my union with him blessed? It wasn't even a real union—as I see it. I can't possibly feel sorry because I am going to be freed from such vermin! That's how I think of him—perhaps you didn't know it? Ada is properly broken-hearted—she is my Vicar. She works it off for me, and you I let see me as I am, and how I feel—not conventionally!" She flung herself back in the car, spent with her tirade.

"I often wonder what you really do feel?"

"Oh, man, can't you see? As Christian did when the burden rolled off his back!"

"Yet you married him—for love, I suppose?"

"For love of his mother, I think. I don't fall in love easily, for all I am so friendly to men!"

"That's perhaps why? *Cuore di carciofolo!*"

"What's that?"

"Artichoke heart—peels off in flakes—don't you know? Well, you are very charming and life is very complicated. I love to hear what you make of it all. I can make nothing of it except that anything so adorably natural and breezy *must* be right! In your heart, Betsey, it is always spring-cleaning—one smells the smell of antiseptic soap, and knows the windows are open! One touch of spite or cattiness, taken in conjunction with your eyes, and you'd be a minx, any one can see that!"

"I'm not a minx!" said she gravely. "Never was. And now— Say a nun, walled up in a cell, buried alive, paralysed! But no more—no more! I see daylight——"

"Through a prison window!"

"I am not going to let myself think of that," she said brutally. "I only know I shall be a widow on the twentieth, and then—I'll do things."

"You can't do so very much. He has spoiled your chances for you."

"No, not quite! I won't let him. I mean to try to begin again. That's why I have been so careful to keep my face out of the papers. No one out of Perton—the great public, I mean—knows what Mrs. Altamont is like. Can't I go to a new country and begin afresh?" She seized his hand. "Ernest, can't I?"

"Can't you? Yes, why not? I suppose you can if you care to!"

He was suddenly cast down. She was too eager about her plans to notice it, but went on—

"Of course I care. I am determined to pull it off."

"*You* can pull off anything if you have a mind. Go to America, marry again, even——" He laughed harshly.

"I had thought of that," she said seriously. He started.

"That's what I mean. I had rather be married than not, and to a good man this time. I don't absolutely hate men, as you know!" she smiled. "Now, listen. I should start with a sort of what do you call it—a *nom de guerre*."

"A *nom de* Saturday to Monday, I suppose!"

"Are you being quite nice? I mean, he wouldn't know who I was till we got to know each other and then, of course, I'd tell him the truth about myself. Out there, on another continent, it wouldn't sound so bad? I should start quite fair, and penniless, for I'll leave the lease of the house and a hundred a year to Ada."

"And how do you mean to get to America?"

"Through you, of course. I should ask you to give me my passage as a parting gift. I wouldn't be expensive, for I shouldn't want a return ticket, you know."

"And supposing I refused?"

"You wouldn't. Why should you? You're rich—and if you weren't, I could always pay you back."

"When you got the man!" He hesitated, ashamed. "No, Betsey, poverty isn't the reason why I should refuse to frank you across. I certainly should refuse——"

"To help me——?"

"To help you to leave me. No. I had hoped——"

"What?" she asked sharply.

"That you would stay with me."

"Marry you, do you mean?"

"How could I? The wife of my uncle's murderer! It would ruin me!"

"It would. I shouldn't think of it. Neither would I allow you to ruin *me!*"

"But——"

"You mean that there's nothing to ruin. That I'm done for already, because of Wilfrid?"

"I don't see what's left for you but the protection and care of some decent man, frankly, as the world goes. The widow of a criminal——"

"I don't see why because I have been the wife of one beast that I should sink into becoming the mistress of another!"

"But that's the long and the short of it, I'm afraid," he said. "I may be wrong——"

"Of course you're wrong. And another thing—you don't love me."

"I believe I do. Honestly. I began to be quite sure when you talked of going to America!"

"That was just temper."

"No, Betsey, I assure you. You have wound yourself round my heart in these days—I am getting to feel that I cannot do without you. I can't bear to think of letting go your hand, or having to hold it across continents. That's why I got so sulky when you spoke of leaving Europe. All this, I know, can't go on for ever—our little jaunts—our good times together; but something might have been arranged, not necessarily derogatory to you?"

"I should have liked that still less," said she frankly. "Don't you see, I want to launch my poor little boat out into the full stream of life again, not to get stuck in a wretched back-water. You don't understand me a bit."

"On the contrary, Betsey, I do. I appreciate you as no one else ever did. I appreciate you so much I feel that I can't bear to part with so much excellence. Curse that man—your husband! Why couldn't he have kept quiet!"

"Then I shouldn't have been a widow at all."

"Well, simply committed suicide, then—ended his useless life without getting mixed up with *my* family. Betsey, I've never wanted anything as much as I've wanted this in my whole life."

"That's not saying so very much if you pretend you love me. But I know all the time that you only want to keep a soothing companion by you for the present, while intending by-and-by to marry Lady Dobrée and consolidate your race."

"I had thought of that," he said simply. "It was a fine plan. But it may never come off. Meantime, I am utterly upset and

miserable at what you have told me of *your* arrangements. Will you give me a kiss ? "

" Certainly," she said. " You have been very good."

She held her soft cool cheek to him, and a loosened bow of her hair fell over his forehead. . . . He breathed heavily, and touched her hair, like a blind man feeling his way.

" I shall never kiss Dobrée like that."

" Don't marry her then. That's my advice to you. Take it. It's good. Here we are at my diggings. Good-bye. You're the nicest man I've ever met—so far—but you're younger than me, remember, and I'm quite young still." She moved to get out.

He put his hand on the door.

" Betsey, if I could marry you, you'd stay ? "

" I believe I would. I'm very fond of you. And I am so keen now on respectability and above-boardness. Marriage with you would be that—perfectly all right. I'm so sick of grovelling here in the suburbs, hiding and pottering and wasting my life on church bazaars and dress talk and ugly nothings. I feel as if I must get out of it, somehow, get into the light, if I can. Marrying you would give me that, wouldn't it ? But—the other thing you proposed would mean going back into the dusk and the gloom, or rather, staying there ! You'd hide me, and I want to be produced."

Veere was silent. The moon-rays broke faintly through the glass panel of the car. The chauffeur's back as he sat there, impassible, waiting, was a solid screen of discretion. . . .

She laid her hand on his shoulder.

" Dear, nice boy, don't be angry with me——"

" What for ? " he muttered.

" For being so set up, for presuming to want to make my own life my way, not yours—having the cheek to refuse you ! Don't visit it on me. Come and take me out again. See me through this. I am all alone, and it's rather awful, although I talk big. Ada's not company. The others avoid me, I've grown to look to you for—such a lot of things. Don't fail me. . . . Let me be myself. . . . I don't love you, not even as much as I thought I did. I knew it when you kissed me."

" Ah, but——"

He came out of his sullen fit, caught her to him, strained her close, murmured soft things to her, called up all the resources and furiously stoked the fires of potential passion. It was a moment that could not last without real emotion to back it. He released her, and her eyes, that had been closed and flattened in the vast fur collar of his coat, opened again on to the moonlit

panes, and the rain-pools, like flakes of silver flashing in the roadway in front. . . .

"You see there's no doubt about my loving you!" he said, as calm, smiling, gently breathing, exhibiting only the faintest signs of discomposure she came out of his arms.

"But what about me?" she just breathed, sadly, getting out of the car.

XVII

Lady Dobrée De Saye owned a little flat in town, the rent of which was paid by her godparent, the Duke of Lax, and lived in it with the slavish little companion that her mother chose for her. This was the condition of her freedom. The earl her father lived at Low Water, far away in the North of England. His dull, but worthy, punctilious and psalm-singing *milieu* was intolerable to his high-spirited daughter, who had once threatened to run away with her brother's tutor, unless she were permitted to live her own life. The permission was given. She lived it now conveniently—with her family's forced aid and help. The ancestral oaks of Angernoune were gradually being carted away to pay for her keep. Lady Angernoune's toilette was sacrificed to her fancies. There was not a numbered *édition de luxe* she didn't order or a Paris model off the nail when she had a mind thereto. Lady Angernoune in her remote northern fastness dressed worse than the housekeeper, who showed the state-rooms, to pay the bill for it, and to supplement her daughter's exiguous allowance. Lady Dobrée's account was always overdrawn. The impoverished parent birds yearned that she should marry, but not a tutor. Lord and Lady Angernoune fondly imagined that this result would be attained, if, taking her strong character into account, they allowed the young lady to compass her destiny herself. Dobrée's head was screwed on the right commercial way, she used her title wisely enough, and at home they had heard of Ernest Rose Veere. The rich Duke of Lax, who wrote books to prove that his vast estates in Somersetshire brought him in nothing, made his niece, yearly, a handsome present of money, which she usually anticipated, and lent her his box at the Opera pretty often in the season; but that was all he could do for her, she knew. He meant to leave her nothing to speak of, for he had too many sons.

Dobrée was only four and twenty, a slight, tall stripling of a girl, with smooth, quite ordinary hair, and grey inexpressive eyes. Her length of limb would have fitted her for the saddle,

but her father could not afford to mount her. She swam, fenced and danced in London, but at other people's expense. She used her position for all it was worth, her title procured her her creature comforts and helped her to "nobble" even *bourgeois* celebrities, for whom she had a mysterious unracial weakness. Those persons of her own station whom she neglected were of opinion that poor Dobrée was running rather to seed in London. She would pitch her set so many pegs lower than that to which her rank and name entitled her. The reason was this, that she loved to bask in the atmosphere of flattery, as it were a savoury joss-stick burned in the room she occupied. Adulation, no matter from what motive it sprang, was the breath of life to her, and she was too simple to realise that she could be of any use to people, and that the oldest name in England had its magic apart from the social merits of its possessor. With tradespeople it practically sent up her bills, in society it made her a *persona grata*, so that she need not patronise the butcher or the fishmonger who overcharged her, but could dine and lunch out free every night of her life.

Presuming on her Norman blood, she did as she liked, and went where she liked. She trifled with morbidity, she paltered with perversity, she entertained pathetic blackmailers and amiable adventuresses, and remained what she was, intrinsically, a simple, egotistic, sweet-natured English girl.

Ethel Taylor, her unpaid companion, was respectable, Scotch, a poor relation, and knew Dobrée through and through. She was over fifty, a feather bed, a mat, boiled rag, all of which engaging appellations her young charge called her in turn, nagging the rag, trampling on the mat, and hugging the feather bed, as the fancy took her.

The real society chaperon of Lady Dobrée was the tall, faded, handsome Lady Maude Erskine-Robertson, who had passed through the Divorce Court, but through the right lobby, the one on the side of the angels, so she said. It must have been so ; it was she who had divorced him, or the Angernounes would never have allowed their girl to go out with her. The two went everywhere together, and left "Effel" at home with the dogs and the cat. Effel patiently combed the cat and tied a blue bow in the dog's fringe and sat the evening through, knitting things for Dobrée. She was not allowed to knit when Dobrée was at home, "It looks so smug and companiony!"

When there was a dinner-party in the flat, Effel went to spend the evening with her sister, who was nurse-housekeeper to old Lord Druid at Garsington House. Lady Dobrée knew this

sister well and went to see her sometimes, to please Effel. She liked to be kind and please people when it was fairly convenient. But Lady Maude was always commandeered to chaperon Lady Dobrée on official social occasions. She was nothing loath. She drifted in one evening of a dinner-party five minutes before the prescribed hour of arrival, so as to discharge her duties. The front of her gown was a marvel of alternate reticence and revelation. She was never *décolleté ;* it might have been better, from the point of view of obvious morality, if she had been. She managed, as Lady Dobrée said, to be " highly indecent " instead ! She had reduced her weight to less than seven stone to suit the exiguities of her banana-skin, and could scarcely sit down in her suggestive costume.

There was time for a few questions.

" Who's your sixth ? "

" I asked Ernest Veere over the telephone."

" Isn't it rather soon ? "

" Well, he's accepted. It's only a small dinner, and dear old Ernest is very modern."

" Oh, very ! " Lady Maude yawned. " Do you know that he's spending his whole time, when he's not giving evidence or paying estate duty, with the wife of the man who murdered his uncle ? "

" I like that."

" *You* would."

" I felt at once, when I met him—where did I meet him ?—that he would amuse me."

" And marry you ? "

" That too, perhaps ! Don't be nasty, Maude. It's the best thing I can do, on the whole. I accepted the situation practically, when I went and stayed at the Veere place in Surrey, and had Ernest up at Low Water. Oh dear ! When once I get over his—what shall I call it—his expectedness—he's not a bit artistic or cultured, is he——?

" He's pure commercial. That's it. His manners are a little too good and too much of them——"

" That's when he talks to us. We're not his world, Maude, and he knows it. I wonder, don't you, how he talks to this Mrs. Altamont ? "

" Fried fish and onions style ! Very pally ! Says whatever comes into his head, or nothing at all, as the case may be. Long silences. I don't suppose he rattles on to amuse her, he keeps that for society, puts it on the moment the man at the door takes his coat and passes him in to us. *We* don't

know where these flies, that amuse us, have been buzzing. I often think we deserve to be strangled in our beds by the people we pick up in the street. We never think of asking for references!"

"We don't ask for bread because we know we'll be given a stone! He could fake them so easily. That's worse, to get caught by an adventurer," said Lady Dobrée. "Now I *know* Ernest's trade. The Veeres were originally Dutch, I know that. The old man had an estate at Veere in Holland."

"Probably bought it cheap to *motiver* the name. Trade has all sorts of dodges. . . . Oh, and let me tell you not to talk to Lee-Brice about his last book, for it's a sore subject. It's been forbidden and the publisher has undertaken to burn all the existing copies."

"What, *The Red Corpuscles!* Oh, how I do sympathise!"

"With the Vigilance people?"

"No, with him. I think it's a wonderful book!"

"If you young girls didn't take to books like that so furiously," said Lady Maude, "there'd be a chance of their being allowed to stay on the counter for the people they really do good to."

"That's what he says—that he doesn't write for the young girl."

"But I'm the proverbial duck's back, Maude. Somehow, I've no use for indecency!"

"I believe it— There's some one—I hear the bell!"

"Rose Veere. I know his voice. I mean to rag him about last night. Listen, I was at the Shaftesbury with the Vallance girls——"

The door opened and Veere was announced.

"Am I the first?" he asked, looking round the room.

"The first shall be last," said Dobrée. "We want you to take us out to supper."

"I don't think I can. I am starting for the north at eight o'clock to-morrow morning, and I want just to taste my bed for an hour or two."

"Is that sincere?"

"Sincere that I love my bed? I adore it."

"I believe you sincerely adore something else!" she said, giving rein to her implanted taste for the simplest forms of chaff. She added: "If the husband gets off, he'll bring an action for divorce!"

Lady Maude laughed, and arranged her feet on the foot-stool.

"Why isn't her portrait in the papers?" pursued the eager young girl, enjoying herself.

"Because she won't have it."

"Why? Is she ugly?"

"No."

"Does she look a lady?"

"That I won't tell you. It's the most descriptive description you can give, and some of these days you'll be seeing her with me."

"I did. Last night. Saw you sitting in the pit of the Shaftesbury with the wife of your uncle's murderer!"

"Dobrée, don't be a brute!" murmured the chaperon.

"Maude, you know you're enjoying hearing me heckling him. We're so modern. Ernest doesn't mind it. He's modern too."

"Don't mind me, Lady Maude," said Veere cheerfully. "I'll answer any questions—decent questions, that is!"

"Well then, tell me, is she very much upset?"

"Rather upset—and very busy, as the schoolboy wrote when he was assisting his widowed mother with her replies to condolences. She—well, you are both so modern you won't be shocked if I tell you—the wife of Altamont is placidly, quietly happy, delighted to be a widow. The man was a regular beast, he drank and struck her and was unfaithful to her, and she's glad to be rid of him. She's modern too."

Veere rose—they all rose—to greet the famous author, Lee-Brice, the distinguished-looking man who wrote undistinguished novels about common people, and visited with the pick of the aristocracy. He was tall and rather grey, with a black pointed beard, this Don Quixote, who had tilted, now successfully now unsuccessfully, against the windmills of Wellingtons and Mudie. Fastidiousness was the note of his face, his small imperial suggested early days spent in diplomacy. Lady Maude had a great weakness for him, as, indeed, she had for all handsome men, and monopolised him for the moment. Veere and his young hostess were left alone.

"So that's your new toy—author?" he said, alluding to Lee-Brice.

"Not much of a toy, is he? More like a greyhound," she said. "He's splendid, I think. I say, do tell me what your Mrs. Altamont is going to do with herself, after——"

"After her husband is hanged," said he calmly. "Well, she has her plans, like the rest of us."

"Are you in them?"

"No, I regret to say. She is going to America, where she intends to re-marry, if it is possible. No one need know her story out there, you see."

"That's the meaning of the Mammoth veil in court——"

"Precisely. Now talk to Lee-Brice, he's got something to say to you."

"I saw you in my part of the world the other day, Lady Dobrée," said the author approaching, partially impelled to this move by Veere's valedictory remark.

"In Mount Street?"

"No, in Wimbledon. I went there to finish a novel—I can't work in town, with the telephone going contantly and people calling. When I have something to finish I take a room somewhere in the suburbs, and work hard at it, seeing no one and leaving my secretary at home to open my letters. Anywhere to avoid the advantages of civilisation!"

"Oh yes," said she, "I remember. I went down to Wimbledon once to see Effel's sister, who's companion to old Lord Druid at Garsington House. And oh, I must tell you—you can put it in a story—I had such an adventure! Suddenly I saw a naked child run screaming out of a house, and down the drive and a bit of the road, and an awful looking woman with a beard run out after it and catch it and take it in. It yelled then like fury; and went on yelling inside. I thought it was my duty, so I rang the bell and gave the girl my card, said I was an inspector—Cruelty to Children, you know—and that I *must* positively come in and make inquiries. She let me in, and they were really quite nice in a suburban way. There was a tea-fight going on, but the woman of the house took me up and explained. The child was having his bath and he got naughty and ran out just as he was, and the old Nanny—she had a beard but she was all right, I found, and adored children—had to go and get him back, but hadn't liked to disturb the tea-party. Wouldn't *you* have thought it your duty to inquire? And all I said—I was very cunning—was that I had heard the screams—and so I did, for all the time we were talking he was yelling fit to take the roof off. Oh, here are the Blessingtons. Now we can go in to dinner."

XVIII

Lady Dobrée was on the whole too egotistic to be a good hostess. She made no effort to lead the conversation, not even in her own direction. It glanced on and off the Altamont trial several times during the meal. Veere sat impassible, like a good boy, eating his dinner, which was neither good nor well served. Betsey, with Ada's help, could manage to give him a better.

"Did you hear?" said Lord Blessington, whose approaching senility was indicated more or less by the fact that he could not keep off the subject connected, and painfully so, with one of the guests, "that one of the halls had offered the wife of Altamont two hundred a week just to appear and sing one song?"

"Is she a frump or a beauty?" asked Lee-Brice.

"Very fine hair, I believe. *The Sweep* had a whole column about her. She lives somewhere about Wimbledon in an old Jacobean manor-house—romantic and so on. They gave a photo of it. The article was in Monday's issue, I think."

"I didn't see it," said Veere. "Who do you say wrote it?"

"Simpson or Simmons—a name like that. A local authoress. Some one who'd got a down on the poor little woman, I imagine."

Veere made a mental note to advise Mrs. Altamont to beware of Evangeline, but forgot. He was interested in a talk he was having with the intensely versatile author about archæology. Lee-Brice, among his thirty-seven literary nurslings, numbered one book of which the scene was laid in Early Saxon times.

"There's an old burying-ground on the links near a place of mine I should like you to see," Veere was saying with all the zest of a Wardour Street shopman, who has got his lesson well by heart. "We'll get it opened. I'll give any one leave who'll undertake it, and pay the damage. There's all sorts of traditions about it."

"What period?"

"They're pre-Christian burials, I think. We find a bit of a lead coffin now and again and sometimes a whole jaw-bone, with very white teeth—that is when the ladies have picked them with a bonnet-pin."

"How disgusting of the ladies," said Dobrée. "It's bad enough to pick your own teeth, but some one else's——!"

"You'd do it, if you were there. It's quite a fascinating occupation. Come and do it. . . . It's at Angernoune."

"*My* ancestral home," said the young lady coolly.

"Your father sold it to my uncle, all fair and square," said

Veere. "Forgive him for buying it, and come and entertain for me there this summer, and bring the present company. There are twenty-three bedrooms in the Dwelling House, and as many more in the Keep. I've no lady of my own family to entertain for me, except an old aunt who's doited, and says the wrong thing all the time."

"That's where you get it!" muttered Lady Maude in a careless whisper.

"I don't mind coming," the girl said, in her harsh voice that could not adequately express the pleasure she felt at this decisive move on Veere's part. "But Maude must come and housekeep."

"Certainly," said that lady complacently. "I take housekeeping in my stride. I'll come certainly if the Blessingtons come too, and my cherubic latest—Lord Vallance!"

Long long ago Lady Maude had taken Lord Blessington in that capacious stride of hers, that now included the boy Vallance. The Blessingtons accepted the invitation *con amore*. The wife's facile conjunction was forthcoming, "Dear Maude is so safe!" was the general opinion of her female contemporaries, victims some of them, once, of her Courts of Love that sat perpetually in Eccleston Square. She went always to fancy balls dressed as the Comtesse de Champagne, and was admitted to have all the passions under her patronage. Veere obediently wanted the company of Vallance of all things, Lee-Brice promised to give Lady Dobrée a fortnight in August, and amid jests and laughter, the house-party for Angernoune was made up.

The Blessingtons made their adieux, Lady Maude and Lee-Brice, and all four packed into the tiny self-working lift.

"By the way," Lee-Brice said to Lord Blessington, "I didn't like to mention it before that young fellow, but there is some talk about a petition on foot to the Home Secretary for Altamont. I understand Veere is interested in the wife?"

"Oh, not to that extent!" said Lady Maude. "He's romantic, that's all." The lift bumped.

Her smile was subtle as she bade the author good-bye in the hall, and got into the Blessington carriage.

"Romantic? Veere?" she said. "He's going in for Dobrée, that's a fact. What else could that invitation to pose as hostess at Angernoune mean!"

"It might mean that he and the Altamont had had a row," said Lord Blessington. "But we shall see."

"At Angernoune. It will be great fun!" said the vivacious lady.

"Don't go!" said Lady Dobrée to Veere when the two were left alone. "Effel's come in. I heard her. I say, do you really want me to come to Angernoune and bring all my friends?"

"Yes, unless you think they are too good for me."

"Don't say things like that, Ernest. But I could not help wondering if you asked me for myself."

"Why else should I ask you?"

"Oh, I don't know." She was ashamed to taunt him with the truth, that she had thought him pushing, and made a hasty accusation, which had, however, some validity in her mind.

"I thought, perhaps, the wife of Altamont might have huffed you?"

"Don't talk about her, it bores me."

"But why should I be so careful not to bore you? You don't mind boring me?"

"I'm sorry. How?"

"You don't behave nicely to me—at least not how I should like you to."

"Tell me how you'd like me to, and I'll try, for you're a good fellow, Dobrée. And when you plead, you are very pathetic, because your voice doesn't exactly lend itself——"

"There you are! What a way to talk to a woman! Telling her straight out that her voice is unsympathetic! Voice isn't everything!"

"Your only weapon, no. You've got others, and, as I say, when you soften——"

"But your voice now, Ernest—I suppose you wouldn't be bothered, talking to me, but your voice never has the sort of inflections that I thought men used to women they admire and desire, when they are alone with them——?"

"Why, you said Miss Taylor was in!"

"Yes, but safely tucked up in bed by now."

"I had better go then!"

She laughed stridently. He rose, and looked at her dissatisfied face, and was touched by it. True, Betsey had huffed him, and he was tired to-night, and spoke roughly.

"Look here, Dobrée, do you want to make me want to make love to you? For I tell you honestly, I am not going to. It wouldn't be good for you, you aren't actuated by the right feminine motives. You're not really a flirt, my dear, and the pose doesn't suit you at all. You are a creamy English girl——"

"Tcha!" She turned away.

"Talking about desire! It's not a word for you to use;

not your line at all. It's as if an aspic were to try to be a mayonnaise. And I'm in a rather bad temper to-night——"

"I see you are. Good night."

"Good night, my dear. I dare say we shall——" He stopped.

"What? Say it."

"Marry each other all right in the end; that is to say, if you care to when the time comes."

"I shall never marry you till I have seen the green light in your eyes."

"What are you talking about, you perverse child!"

"Something Maude said—connected with that word you disapproved of my using so much. Good night!"

"Use it as much as you like, but not to me," said Veere. "You don't come in there with me. Good night! I've enjoyed myself very much, thank you." He kissed her hand.

"So glad!" They both laughed.

"You should learn not to stick your knuckles out so when they kiss your hand!" said he as he left the room.

* * * * *

"He meant when I am the wife of a Cabinet Minister and receive foreign notabilities—Lady Dobrée Veere, *At Home!*" Dobrée told Effel, waking her up, and relating the experiences of the evening. "But I must say I feel a fool when some one is kissing my hand, and I am thinking of all sorts of different things as I look out over his bald parting——"

"Mr. Veere isn't bald," remarked Effel sleepily.

"No, but he's the kind of man who soon will be, if he works so hard, and runs the wife of Altamont at the same time. He makes, but he's not made of, cast-iron. Effel, laugh!"

Effel laughed.

"As for Mrs. A., I've fought her and I've beaten her, and I feel proud, for she's what they call desirable, I'm sure. I teased Ernest about it to-night, when he was courting me in his usual casual fashion. Is he cold—or am I?"

"I hardly know what you mean?" said Effel.

"No, poor dear. Well, the fact is, I like fifty men better than Ernest, in that way, even the author who dined to-night! But alack, they have none of them sixty thousand a year!"

"Has Mr. Veere?"

"More. And it will take it all, all, to make him go down."

"But I thought your people——"

"Oh, they're all right. Father'll stop tree-cutting and mother will start her model dairy. And, of course, the Laxes and the Minians are quite aware which side of their bread isn't

buttered. They don't want to go on keeping me. And they don't think I've got quite the right woman to go out with, but what have I to offer to a really smart person? It's the Veeres and so on that she can introduce me to, with some chance of my going down and off! Do you think I don't know that? I'm rather deep really; I go with the tide. I go with Veere. Only I wish he'd take some lessons in the art of making love!"

"He's such a nice-looking young man, I think!"

"Dear old Effel!" said her young charge sorrowfully, stooping down and kissing her. "Good night!"

XIX

Mrs. Altamont was intent, all her faculties surrendered to the cutting out of a suit for little Wilfrid on the dining-room table in Worksop House—it was the only table in the house you could cut out on. Ada, from the adjoining kitchen department, wandered in and out, carrying, absently, various stained and sooty culinary implements backwards and forwards—a lovely scullion, for she had gained weight and her complexion had improved since her domestication in Betsey's home.

"Ada, put that pan down—not here; it's all black round the bottom—and catch me Billy. This is basted ready for him to try on. He's under the table, with Ginger."

Mrs. Cox stooped under the table and addressed her apparently inanimate son.

"Come out, Billy! Come to your mammy!"

"Which one?" said Billy, with a mind to tease and procrastinate.

"This one!" said Mrs. Altamont sharply. "Come along, quick! I've no time to waste."

Billy was then temporarily arrayed in a sober, manly serge covering, held together precariously by scant white threads, and stood up in front of his own mother, whose secret ideal of clothes for her boy was that embodied in the picture "Bubbles." She murmured tamely, "He'll look quite the man in it!"

Mrs. Altamont's mouth was full of pins. Ada went on:

"I wish his poor father could see him in it. Billy, don't you long to see daddy again?"

"Don't," said Betsey, removing such pins from her lips as positively impeded speech, "don't work him up like that! What's the good of putting impossible ideas into the child's head?"

"Impossible ideas?" Ada stared.

"The idea that he'll see him again when he won't."

"My goodness, you *are* hard!"

"No, I'm not." The eyes of the speaker filled with tears.

"Oh yes, you're crying fast enough," Ada said resentfully. "But not for him. It's for yourself you're crying."

"Yes, for myself, and Billy, and you, for anybody but the man who's plunged us into this for nothing!" She threw down the scissors.

"For nothing! His children were starving and I told him so."

"Miss Altamont was going to do something."

"But she went and died first," Ada complained, sitting down and falling into her second fit of tears this morning. She generally had five or six. She fed and fostered her insurgent nerves with continual sluicings of tea; there were days when her usual allowance of sixteen cups was exceeded. She drank no spirits.

Mrs. Altamont swept the materials of Billy's suit off the table and began to sew, feverishly, inexpertly, but sturdily. Ada was ashamed. She rose and wiped her eyes on her apron.

"Look here, this is the way to nowhere. I'll go back to my work. Shall Billy stay with you?"

"Yes, I'll mind him. I'll take him for a walk as soon as I have got this put together, so that I don't lose all the pins."

She sat and worked. Her head, a shining platter, a disc of gold, was downcast, and her cheek was flushed. The child played happily at her feet. Presently there was a ring at the outer door bell.

Mrs. Altamont, without waiting for her hysterical cook, rose and admitted the friendly detective who had brought her the news of the crime in the first instance.

Inspector Whortleberry admired the wife of Altamont and was impressed by the dramatic circumstances of her case. His histrionic leanings were, however, a good deal damped by the life he led, and would never have betrayed him into a breach of discipline, though, indeed, the spectacle of the murderer's wife with the murderer's child by another woman on her knee, was stimulating and richer in suggestion than most of the usual combinations that came under his notice. Betsey knew exactly the state of his feelings about her, and manipulated them at her pleasure. She encouraged him to call often, and give her all the news she wanted.

"I have called to tell you, Mrs. Altamont, that there is going to be a petition signed and sent up to the Home Secretary."

"What for?" Her eyes grew round and strained; she suspended the play of her needle. "Run away to your mother, Billy, and tell her I sent you."

The child went at once—he always obeyed Betsey faithfully.

"It is a petition to commute the death sentence," the inspector said solemnly.

"Is that so?"

"Yes. It may be granted—we cannot tell. It depends on the list of names—and popular feeling is rather strong in his favour."

"I wonder why?"

"Well, you see, Mrs. Altamont, the attempt at suicide——"

"Showed the purity of his intentions!" she sneered.

"It showed the state of despair that the man was in. And then the doctors bringing him round—operating on him only to fit him to be hanged; after all—you see, it gets up a lot of sympathy in the public——"

"The public doesn't reason."

"No, Mrs. Altamont, we have to take that into account. But the present Home Secretary is a stern man—there ain't no nonsense about him. He doesn't take much count of petitions, especially those *The Sweep* gets up."

"My husband was once on the staff of that paper. . . . Well, thank you very much, Mr. Whortleberry, for coming here to tell me these things."

"Not at all, madam, I am very pleased to be of any use to you." He was *distrait* and so was Mrs. Altamont. During the course of his last speech they had heard a motor stop outside Worksop House, and both the inspector and Betsey knew who it was.

Whortleberry took his respectful leave of the enchantress.

He had come across Veere in Worksop House before; this made twice—it was custom, then! It was another aspect of the unconventionality that ran all through the Veere Murder case.

He knew well enough that his news was unwelcome to Mrs. Altamont. Naturally so. The poor girl was young, handsome, and absolutely indifferent to her criminal husband. What was sport to the British public was death to her and her future. He also, for Mrs. Altamont's sake, rejoiced in the reputed severity and unyielding character of the Home Secretary of the day, which would impel him to reject the careless popular cry. Petitions like this go to the very root of human nature. It is as impossible to avoid inscribing one's name at the bottom of an appeal to mercy as to refuse to put one's hand

in one's pocket at Christmas in response to the prayers of indiscriminate, ill-judged charity.

"Well, Betsey, I'm back. Travelled all night," Veere said, coming in rather boisterously.

"And have you pulled it off—what you went to do?" she asked, making an effort of detachment.

"Yes. Done the deed—deal, I mean. I say," he grew serious, "have you seen the papers this morning—or did that stout beggar I met going out come to tell you? It's not his business—but I suppose your eyes——"

"Don't, Ernest, he means to be kind. Yes, he told me—but he reassured me as well. He says it's most unlikely the Home Secretary will agree to it. I'm speaking low, because of Ada. I never know—she is so keenly interested, she listens!"

"Well, will you come for a spin in the car?"

"Yes, if I may take the child. I promised him a walk."

"All right, I'll take you to Kensington Gardens."

"To Kensington, when we live on Wimbledon Common?"

"Yes, and it is common to him. We'll buy him a boat and swim it on the Round Pond. Come on."

Betsey opened the door leading to the kitchen and called:

"Ada! Mr. Veere is here. Send Billy along, will you?"

Veere stooped and kissed the child, tweaking his "Bubbles" frills. "You dear little figure of fun!" he said. "I've no moustache for you to pull. Pity, isn't it?"

"Daddy has a moustache. . . . I've only one daddy and two mammys!"

They dressed him between them and hustled him off, promising to buy him a little ship at the first shop they came to in Kensington. As they packed into the motor, Evangeline Simmons passed by and gawkily made a gesture between a familiar nod and a distant bow to Betsey, who pretended not to see it. She was not inclined to forgive Evangeline for the interview just yet, though she fully admitted the terrible temptation to make capital out of a friend's misfortunes that had been presented to a young lady of journalistic tendencies.

They had stopped half-way at a fancy repository in West Kensington to buy the little ship that Billy was clamouring for. A large printed paper was spread out on the counter, which the quick-eyed Betsey spied, and at once turned away from. The shopwoman, however, timidly presented it to Veere's notice.

"Petition to reprieve Altamont! Not I!"

"Perhaps the lady would like to sign it?"

"The lady doesn't approve of the object of the petition,"

Veere informed her off-handedly. "Are you aware that the man himself is not anxious to live? He tried to kill himself."

"Ah, but think of his po'r wife?" said the shopwoman. "And her left with two little children!"

"You are misinformed," said Veere carelessly. "She has none."

The woman gave it up, and went for the change. Betsey nudged him. "Don't let us wait for the change."

"We must, or she will begin to think things."

They lunched at the hotel overlooking Kensington Gardens, and then sailed the little ship on the Round Pond for half an hour in such a thoroughly half-hearted and ineffective manner that Billy was disgusted, and said he didn't care about sailing his new boat at all, but wanted badly to sit down under the trees on a penny chair with green slats.

"It's too cold!" was Betsey's cross reply to his petition. "We had better be getting home. I don't know whatever your mother will say to me, you've gone and messed your nice suit all over with water——"

"Betsey! Betsey!" objected Veere good-humouredly. "Here are you crabby—when you have a good right to be tragic! It's the sign of a healthy nature, I suppose?"

"Oh yes." She flew out, pettish as a child. "I'm healthy—damn healthy—but just now I'm so tired I can hardly stand!"

"We will sit down for a minute then," he said, "and please *both* the children. It's really quite mild. . . . Betsey, I understand."

"You do. You're an angel. . . . You don't think me a monster, do you?" she half sobbed, looking up into his kind eyes as she sank into a seat.

"No, of course not. I consider you're a woman awfully put upon—regularly bashed by Fate! No one, knowing all the circumstances, and your own peculiar temperament, could blame you for feeling—not quite *en règle*, shall we say? Even the inspector doesn't, and he's not so much prejudiced in your favour as I am, at least I hope not. But we can none of us do anything one way or another. The Law must take its course."

"Yes, if they'd only let it! Oh, my God, what am I saying?"

"Don't mind me!"

He idly threw Billy's ball, which he was holding, to a little distance, so as to get rid of the boy and his inquiring gaze till Betsey should right herself, for she was crying.

She dried her eyes, and spoke passionately.

"Every woman—even a woman of no temperament at all—would feel as I do, if she had the honesty to admit it, or was as blunt and tactless as I am. Don't I know that if they'd had a tithe of what I've had to put up with, they'd be mad, enraged, wild, to find themselves taken out of the sun they had just crawled out into for a moment, blinking their eyes—and put back again into their dark cages alone with a maniac! . . . Tied to him with a chain, and when he moves, they've got to move too! Oh, if Wilfrid were only dead, and the earth over him!"

"You do say dreadful things, my Betsey, somehow, but somehow I understand you. It is this way, isn't it? You mean, if that were so, you would feel he was redeemed—purified from his sin by the wholesome earth, with robins bringing dead leaves to cover him, and so on?"

"Oh, don't be poetical, please," she replied brutally. "I'm afraid I wasn't thinking of him, I was thinking of me. Yes," relenting a little, "that is what I do mean. He would be safe underneath, all his wickedness cancelled down there, thrown away like dirt, like old clothes, like last year's slumber. But to have to think of him continually, alive in a sickening cell, the disgusting papers telling you day by day how he is in health and spirits, gloating on it in their horrid way, and all the world expecting me to pelt off to go and see him in prison! My God!"

"Hush!" said the man at her side. "Billy's coming back."

She rallied to his caution and when Wilfrid's boy toddled up to her, she bent to him kindly and normally.

"What is it, Billy? What do you want?"

"To give you a kiss," said the child timidly.

"It's his way of showing you sympathy," said Veere hastily. "Do."

She obeyed and hugged the boy very nicely. Contented with his little demonstration, the child sped away again, and Betsey murmured, shamefaced:

"He wanted to console me for crying, and I was crying because they were going to spare his father's life!"

"Yes, but I don't think they will," said Ernest Veere. "They won't prevail with the man who's boss now. I know him a bit. He's firm. And the public's a mere sentimental idiot, collectively, and its sympathy's all misplaced, for I hear, on the best authority, that they have all the trouble in the world to prevent him from finishing himself in prison."

"Poor Wilfrid!" she said gently, drying her eyes. On the lips of the fierce revengeful Mænad of a moment ago, Veere felt that this tardy expression of sympathy was sincere, the

slow shining forth of the true womanly sense of pity, whose workings in her had been temporarily obscured by selfish considerations. He loved her, but this exhibition of a raw soul which he had laid himself out for, troubled and worried him.

Did she apprehend that her slave, even in so little, was becoming alienated? For she stood up and stooped to him, saying sweetly, with her tremulous, bow-shaped mouth:

"Ernest, I've made a fool of myself, and you've let me. Thank you. Come Billykins, we'll be going. Send us home, will you, Ernest? Don't come with us this time. I want to tell poor Ada."

"Let's have a look, what a nice ship you got!" exclaimed poor Ada, opening the door of Worksop House, and dusting the flour and currants sticking on her hands. "I was just making you a nice cake for tea."

Betsey, though thrall to deepest tragedy, made a wry face at this announcement.

"Who gave it to you? Mr. Veere? He *is* a nice kind man. And good gracious, Betsey, my dear, whatever makes *you* look so down in the mouth?"

"I hadn't better tell her this very moment," thought the other woman, half considerate, half cowardly, and busied herself in extricating the child from damp garments complicated by reason of their smallness.

Nervously she said, "Look what Billy's done to his pants, messing about by the Round Pond, I knew you would be cross."

"Not I!" said Ada cheerfully. "I'm not a fusser. No more'd you be, if you'd had two. But you're a regular old maid, you are!"

"Somebody may as well be pleased," said Betsey then, in a hard voice. "Ada, there's a petition set up in all the shops to the Home Secretary to get Wilfrid off!"

Ada dropped Billy's cap that she was holding. Mrs. Altamont picked it out of the grate. "Now don't faint—don't be silly, or I'll wish I hadn't told you."

"You just dare not tell me! Who d'ye say'll get him off? The King?"

"I *said* the Home Secretary. He can reverse the verdict if he thinks proper."

"Don't bother me with your Home Secretary! Does he think Wilfrid'll get off—I mean, do you? I don't know where I've got my head. You might be kind, Betsey, though you don't care. It's life and death to me!"

She sat down by the fire and rocked herself to and fro, and the firelight caught one of the grey strands in her hair. There were several. Betsey saw them. Ada was only twenty-seven. Betsey knelt down.

"Yes, I will be kind. But I know nothing more than that there's a petition out—which I didn't sign——"

"Oh, Betsey, and you his wife! How could you!"

"I couldn't, Ada. It's no good, I don't want him saved. I'm not a Catholic, but I want him to be well punished for his fault here, and then perhaps God will let him off purgatory—afterwards. He ought to pay, and then they won't send the bill in again."

"He's paid! He's paid—in full. He tried to kill himself. That was paying—his way of paying. And then there's me! Can't you think of me? Why must I pay? *I* never murdered anybody. And if Wilfrid dies it will be my life that they take. Oh, Betsey, you are so much cleverer than me—you've been edicated—give your mind to it! Think and tell me what you think. I can't put two ideas together. I'm too addled with misery. Oh, say you think he may come back!"

Mrs. Altamont spoke her pious lie distinctly. "I think it is possible he may live to come back—to you. In twenty years or so!"

"Oh, thank you. You mean——"

"I mean they won't let him out all at once. They will send him to penal servitude, and, if he is very good, they might commute his sentence—let him out sooner, you know."

"I'll be dead, perhaps, first," said Ada, staring into the fire and grasping a fold of Betsey's gown. "I may never see my children's father again; you don't seem to think of that, Betsey? Oh, cruel, cruel 'tis! You don't pity him—but you might pity me?"

"Yes, I do, I do," returned the other, in full generous tones, putting her soft white hand over the bony talons that clawed her gown. "And that's why I— But I don't—now——"

Her incoherency mattered little, for Mrs. Cox paid no attention to such strangled meanings. She spoke on, swiftly, interrupting her comfortress:

"Oh, but Betsey, even if I never see him again I can get on, for I shall know he won't be dead—not hanged—by his poor thin neck. . . ." A long shudder ran through her. "Such an awful death, Betsey. You couldn't wish it for any one—not even a man you hate—as you hate Will. . . ."

Mrs. Altamont made no reply. She had slid down on her

knees on to the hearthrug beside her cook—her husband's mistress, of whose hand she did not choose to let go. She alternately chafed and clasped it. Ada evidently derived comfort from her unspoken, only faintly indicated sympathy, the touch was all. . . . Firmly she held the kind nurse-like hand, as a baby might, uncritical of the quality of the emotion that radiated thence. Presently she raised her head and flung back the shroud of her crisped black hair :

"That's settled, isn't it ? He'll be let off. . . . The Home Secretary's a kind man. A just man. He can't deny . . . and all England's on Will's side. . . . He can come back to me ! He can come back when he likes, and any hour of the day or night he'll find me waiting ! "

A pause.

Ada was dimly vexed. She could not see Betsey's face, sedulously concealed, and that disturbed her. She repeated :

"He'll find me waiting ! And, Betsey, you're tied to him . . . fast tied too. We're both tied to him, aren't we . . . ? Oh, Betsey, do speak, do say something ! "

"How can I ? " exclaimed the other passionately, between her sharply taken breaths. "Do you want me to say that he'll find me waiting too ? You do ? Two women he's——! My God ! " Her voice changed. "Where's the child ? "

She jumped up, leaving the other prone under her withering displeasure. "Where's Little Katie ? " she continued.

"Having their teas, bless them ! " answered Ada in smothered tones, then plucking up a spirit, she declaimed :

"Poor innocent children, that you want to make orphans of ! "

She nursed her knees, and rocked to and fro, an interminable gesture. Betsey, tearless, sat up, in a high chair, sardonically regarding her vicar, officiating now in the full panoply and trappings of grief.

XX

Weeks passed. The Petition for Altamont's life lay on the counters of shops and gathered up names, the lists in the papers swelled apace. The two women whose very fate depended on the will of the Home Secretary, acted on by the whim of the sentimental section of the British public, knew no ease. The prayers that went up from Worksop House must have clashed and neutralised each other on their way to the Throne of the Most High. Ada formulated her prayers ; she was a believer. Betsey did not, but Betsey's were none the less insistent, addressed to no

specific arbiter and unregistered on the mental altars we all have within us. They could not "settle to anything." Ada Cox could not cook, but then this omission was adjusted by the corollary that Mrs. Altamont could not eat. Billy and Little Katie did not starve, their joint guardians took care of that; they were as happy as quiet little children ever are at Christmas.

For Christmas and its enforced jollity came down on the sad, expectant household of four, and sucked them up in its insensate round of meaningless ceremonies. To please the children! The colour of oranges, the sound of crackers, a blue ribbon round Ginger's neck: all this followed.

In the tactless papers there was much talk of a Christmas prisoner and seasonable clemency, which did not escape two pairs of eyes in Worksop House and gave rise to very different feelings. Both Ada and Betsey bought halfpenny papers and conned them in their cold winter bedrooms. Either woman would have died of shame if the other had caught her. And their confusion proceeded from divers motives. Mrs. Altamont's attitude towards the appeal to mercy was never again alluded to by the other excited participant in the Perton tragedy, who honestly tried to forget that Betsey, whom she loved and who was so kind, eagerly scanned the papers to find a result counter to all her own dearest hopes.

The whole neighbourhood that ostracised, and were in their turn ostracised by the wife of Altamont, watched her behaviour keenly. Her cook, when she went out of doors to do the necessary marketing—for Betsey herself never went into a shop now, or out at all except with Veere, was stared at by Mrs. Altamont's old friends occupied on the same errand. One or two of them went so far as to ask her how her mistress was? The Burne-Jones' cook—"a queer-looking woman, you know, but I dare say Betsey finds a difficulty in getting respectable servants to come to her!" was used to answer shortly, sullenly, and refused to contribute the information, a desire for which had prompted the question. Evangeline Simmons, kind, curious soul, did more than speak to the cook, she thought she would like to send Mrs. Altamont a Christmas card. She carefully chose out one that did *not* in any way bear on the situation, and she left it at the door, which Ada answered, little Katie clinging to her gown. Evangeline was grateful for even this transitory glimpse into the interior of her dear Betsey, whose sorrows she had made two-pound-ten out of. She asked to see her as usual, and as usual was told that Mrs. Altamont was not at home.

"How proud she is!" was her respectful thought as she

turned away. A large London tradesman's cart rattled up just then and left—actually—a small Christmas tree at the door of Worksop House! Mr. Veere was going to give the cook's children a Christmas tree! Her novelist's mind jumped at once to that conclusion, which happened to be the right one.

This romance going on under the shadow of the gallows delighted Evangeline. The motor-clad, furry Prince, the cloistered beauty, the Burne-Jones' cook, the mysterious, starved-looking children that went with the cook, and whom Veere thought it necessary to provide with a seasonable fir-tree from Baltic forests! —Oh, why wouldn't Betsey see her and let her be in it? It was her due. She wasn't narrow, like Mrs. Gedge; she was truly the *confidante* proper, or improper—built for the part. She supposed Betsey was a bit annoyed by that wretched interview! She was, indeed, a little ashamed of having written it. She was a Judas now who felt inclined to quarrel with the scanty wage of silver doled out to her by *The Sweep*, that patron of lost, sensational causes.

She took to haunting the outskirts of Worksop House, making it convenient to pass by the door at least three or four times a day. Thus, the daily visits of Mr. Veere to the house, and the slightly more spaced out ones of Inspector Whortleberry did not escape her encouraging notice. But they were only accessories, she *would* get speech of Betsey, the chief protagonist, too. Of that she was determined.

Her opportunity came. The next time Inspector Whortleberry came, it was on Twelfth Night. The snow had come and Ada was interviewing a snow-away at the door. Whortleberry nodded to Mrs. Altamont's cook, whom even he was far from suspecting to be the Ada Cox mentioned in the Altamont trial, and passed in. Miss Simmons, with the courage of romance, followed him, and by some dexterous juggling with outer and inner doors that folded back, succeeded in evading his eyes and stowing herself away in one of the upstairs rooms, where she patiently suffered the worst extremities of cold while the interview with the inspector lasted.

Inspector Whortleberry had not much to say. In fact his was a Christmas visit. His superior soul revolted against wishing Mrs. Altamont either a Merry Christmas or even a Happy New Year, but by sheer good luck he had found a card in one of the vast trays exhibited by the shops which embodied his hopes on her behalf and stated them, so it seemed to him, in the most delicate way. Under the floral emblem that decorated the card, a line from Shakespeare was blazoned:

"... *My gentle lady, I wish you all the joy that you can wish.*"

Mrs. Altamont tore off the envelope and looked at it ruefully. She was embarrassed. But she reflected, with her usual elasticity of thought and sympathy, that the choice of this card showed nothing but nice feeling on Mr. Whortleberry's part, and she therefore thanked him for it cordially and prettily, stuffing into his hands some splendid crackers for the children he had not got, though he was much too shy to tell her so.

His unofficial visit had lasted a shorter time than poor Mrs. Cox expected. She fell away from the door in a strained position as soon as Betsey opened it to let the inspector out. He cleverly turned aside and looked out of the window while Betsey raised Ada.

"My poor girl," said she kindly, "we were not talking about that!"

After the stress of the moment was over and Whortleberry had gone, she was inclined to be a little more severe. She interviewed her cook in the kitchen as she was preparing the potatoes for an Irish stew.

"You mustn't, Ada, you really mustn't let yourself down so as to listen at doors. And why you should imagine that Inspector Whortleberry always comes to talk about Wilfrid——?"

"What's he come for then? To blarney you and get your name up! Oh, you needn't toss your head, that's what they're all saying!"

"Who's all saying?"

"They! They!" Ada repeated obstinately. "I tell you, you won't have a bit of character left. There's that Miss Simmons always hanging about, trying to get by me—I shouldn't wonder if she isn't in the house now—I thought I saw something go past when that man came!"

"Nonsense, Ada. Keep to the point, and that is, you must really stay in your kitchen when I have visitors."

"And leave you and him shut up for hours together——"

"That's not true, Ada."

"Poor Wilfrid! Nobody cares what becomes of him but me! *You* aren't talking about Wilfrid, you says—no, trust you! Your own two beautiful selves, of course. And yet that's the man that knows all about my poor boy and could tell me if he liked. But you're right, it ain't no good my listening at doors to what you and he say, or I'd do it, and more, if I could get to know about him. I'm fit to burst. I have to go picking it up bit by bit from the tradesmen, and look silly, arsking questions

as if I was keen on knowing about murders and bloody details and that—I who never knew anything about that sort of thing till I came into this family! . . . No, I know well enough as the policeman doesn't come to talk about my affairs—not he! I've listened to you two enough to know that it ain't worth my while to listen. Nor Mr. Veere, neither, comes for that. I call it shameful, you, his wife, his real wife, not to take more care of his name!"

She paused, exhausted with the mere effort of vituperation. Mrs. Altamont turned away with a disagreeable smile on her lips. Her outward tranquillity calmed the other woman, who turned and looked back to the other end of the room where her child was playing in the window seat.

"Now then, I suppose I'll have to go," she sighed, spent. "You give me notice, don't you? Here, Billy, leave them bricks of yours, and let's take ourselves off where we come from!"

"Leave the child alone, Ada!" Betsey put herself in front of the boy, who in his full confidence never even suspended his making of bridges. "I'm not going to take a bit of notice of what you say, except to tell you you'll be sorry for it afterwards. You've got a lot to put you out and vex you. So have I, but in a different way. Be quiet now, stop crying, there's a dear! We won't talk of it again. . . . I don't know how you will look at the piece of news Mr. Whortleberry did tell me—not to-day, but a few days ago. I didn't tell you, not to hurt you more, but Wilfrid nearly managed to do for himself last week in prison—got hold of a knife or something. That's all *he* cares for their reprieve! And to tell you the truth I respect him for it! I think better of him than I did for attempting it. . . . And I think it was a shame of them to prevent him making an end of himself at the first, and getting nicely out of it all!"

"Yes, and leave you free to marry your man! . . . Now—you may believe me, I'd sooner go!" She clutched the little boy again, and with hysterical strength lifted him right over her shoulder.

"*Will* you put that child down! He's far too heavy for you—now, thank goodness!"

The mother let him slide out of her arms, and Billy sidled up and clung to Mrs. Altamont. Her breast heaved—she took him on her knee. Ada stood looking at the pair with sullen vindictive eyes. At last Betsey looked up, hers were full of kindness and contrition.

"Poor child, he doesn't know what to make of it, us two

quarrelling ! You looked as if you were going to claw my eyes out, my dear, don't you know ? "

Ada said nothing. She looked tired, and leaned against the kitchen table, while Mrs. Altamont went on, softly :

" Of course I shan't let this outburst of yours make any difference—not even your last taunt about Mr. Veere. But I'll tell you how it really is. You silly girl, do you suppose that Mr. Veere would think of marrying the widow of a man who has been hanged for murder—the murder of his own uncle too ! My poor Ada, don't you see that your precious Wilfrid has spoilt both our lives, yours and mine, whatever happens. Only if he *is* reprieved, mine will be spoilt a little worse and you'll be no better off. Look at it like that. Try to see my point of view. For I—" she paused—" it may sound brutal, but I had hoped to be able to do something decent with the remains of my life—make a fresh start——"

" If I understand you," said Ada quite quietly—she had begun to peel potatoes—" you are building your happiness on a man's death ! That seems a bit queer to me ! . . ." She picked out an eye from the potato vindictively. She heard Betsey catch her breath, almost sob, and when she looked up again her victim was gone.

The kitchen fire crackled brightly, Billy had returned to his bricks, Ginger the cat lay stretched full length in indolent ease in front of the blaze.

The sight roused Ada's smouldering rage. She seized a broom —but desisted weakly. Then she addressed her little son, who regarded her, wide-eyed.

" We'll let the cat be, won't we, Billy ? She's fond of him, as much as she's fond of anybody ! Hard as nails she is. . . . Go 'long, Ginger, go 'long to her ! She's in the dining-room, warming her toes, and naught but a man's life between her and her happiness ! "

XXI

Mrs. Altamont rushed up to her bedroom to get a pocket-handkerchief. Evangeline came forward :

" Oh, Betsey, I had to—I had to see you somehow. Won't you forgive me ? "

" Yes, yes. Sit down," said the other wearily. " I'm too tired to have another row ! "

" Who've you had a row with ? "

" My cook," said Betsey laconically. " She gave me notice."

" After all your kindness to her ! "

"What kindness? I give her her wages—the same as Georgie had."

"Yes, but you took her with all those children. And I dare say a husband out of work somewhere?"

"No, no husband."

"Are the children——?"

"Illegitimate—yes."

"How awfully good of you. Look here, I've brought a book for you—you know you wanted it. The condemned book. Lee-Brice's. I'll give it you. I caught it up just before I left home——"

"And came on here with your burnt offerings," said Mrs. Altamont. "Thanks, I never read novels now."

"The novel has come to you, hasn't it?" hazarded Evangeline, laying her present slyly down.

"Come to stay, I think, like motor-cars. Well, as you're here, we had better go and sit where there's a fire."

"Delighted. My crop of chilblains is terrific this winter."

She babbled about her chilblains till they were settled by the dining-room fire downstairs. Ada's children were banished to the kitchen for the first time in their stay, by a visitor.

"You see one reason why I refuse myself to people," said Betsey. "These poor little things have the freedom of the house, and I don't fancy Mrs. Wormeley caring to come here and tumble over my cook's family using the dining-room."

"Oh," said Evangeline, "if that was all! Mrs. Wormeley—!" Betsey was eyeing her curiously. "But why need we talk about Mrs. Wormeley?"

"What do you suppose I let you in for, Evangeline? I want to know all the gossip about me."

"Oh, do you?" Evangeline settled in, threw off her boa, and bared her ankles to the blaze. "What fun! Well, of course, you know— But do let me say first, that I personally utterly approve of you——"

"*You* would!"

"Yes, you see I am a thorough woman of the world. Nothing shocks me that the smart set does. I adore sharp contrasts and antithesi—is that right?"

"I dare say. I keep off such dangerous ground myself. Go on. What do they say?"

"Well, you know, you are not taking it quite as they think you ought. Mrs. Gedge is a wee bit jealous, as we all know, and the more Dr. Gedge asks her to look you up, the more she won't, and it's worth as much as his life is worth to offer to go and see

you himself, or he'd have bounded! Madge Wormeley's really all right, only Mortimer is the usual reactionary husband, don't you know, the kind of Helmer man we all used to talk about! He told Nora—Madge, I mean—that he'd have had no objection to her supporting you, if you had been keeping quiet, but you've chosen your atmosphere wrong, for him, don't you know, being consoled all over the place by the son of the——"

"Nephew."

"—Nephew of the man your husband—attacked. And they say you went to call on the barmaid—he liked, and gave her money?"

"Is that all?"

"No. You're supposed—you know what people are!—to have a flirtation with the policeman who brought you the news—that he's in and out the house constantly."

"After my cook, perhaps?"

"That may be. I'll tell Madge Wormeley. But the worst thing you've done is casting *me* off so completely. Me, the only woman in all Wimbledon who could understand you, knew you through and through—a real broad-minded woman who went a little too far, even for them, and you kept *me* away? As if, Madge said, you couldn't stand even a tolerant person seeing what you were up to! Some of those motor rides, for instance."

"Why didn't I take you, eh?"

"Well, once or twice, say, to give a decent colour to the business. It isn't as if you disliked me!"

She looked keenly at Betsey, wondering if she had really read the article before her—Betsey, who now looked so innocent and unwitting. She concluded that no generous woman could be so full of guile as to conceal her knowledge thus perfectly, and felt emboldened to say appealingly:

"Now, my dear old pal, why wouldn't you make all right and see me sometimes?"

"To tell you the truth, old chum, I forgot you! So much going on! I've never had a dull moment since the day Wilfrid was tried."

"Oh, Betsey, I'm so sorry for Mrs. Wormeley, she would so enjoy hearing you say that! You're just the same—epigrammatical, and cool as ever!"

"You can go and tell her you've seen me—retail all my *bons mots!* It's her day at home. Good Lord, what a way back it seems!"

"Gracious! So it *is* her day. Do you remember those sort of things?"

"Submerged landmarks—yes."

"You *have* got an edge on you, dear. They'd be simply delighted to see you, I believe?"

"And hustle me into a cupboard as soon as they heard Mr. W.'s step in the hall. No, thank you. Have they still got Selina?"

"Gracious, no! No more than you've got Georgie."

"I could have kept Georgie if I'd liked," said Mrs. Altamont with vivacity. "She didn't leave to better herself, like I'll bet you a shilling Selina did, but to get married. Crump's man, in Wimbledon—a very decent young fellow."

"Well, never mind. Let's talk about something interesting. That petition they've sent up—do you think it'll have any effect? I ask you because I know you're broad-minded enough to look at the question dispassionately, aren't you?"

"Oh, quite. I'll answer you. Listen. Do you suppose, Evangeline Simmons, that if I had thought Wilfrid would get off, and that it was on the cards I might have to go on living here among you all, that I should have cared to set all the neighbourhood against me? No. It would have been silly. But I knew from the very first, I had an instinct or whatever you like, that he'd be hanged. So I wanted to make the place too hot to hold me, and to have every excuse for getting out of it. I'm glad you all took your cues so quick and dropped me! It doesn't make it at all hard to leave, as it might have been, if people had been kind to me and stood by me. You left it to an outsider to do that, a man who had the grace to come to Miss Altamont's funeral because he respected her. Think of that!"

Her voice broke.

"And as for me, why, you have all been horrid to me. Perfectly detestable! You too, Evangeline! Don't suppose I don't know quite well what you've done in particular—the shabby trick you played on me! You can't think, can you, why I didn't speak of it before? The fact is I didn't care to. I'm going away to shake the mean tale-bearing dust of you all off my feet, and break new ground, good clean fresh ground instead of the weary old dust of a squalid suburb. You can call me cynical if you like!"

"I do," murmured Miss Simmons hastily.

"Yes. You used to admire it in me! Well, take this from me now, and for ever after hold your peace. I am *not* going to marry Mr. Veere. I won't hide anything from you. I'm not going to bind myself to any one—on this side of the Atlantic, at least."

Evangeline looked stunned with this impact of intelligence.

"Well, this *is* news!" she mumbled.

"You've got what you came for, haven't you?"

"I think, Betsey, all the same, if you'll allow me to say so, that you might show a little human feeling for the poor man whose wife you still are. A husband is a husband——"

"Not when he's doing time," said Betsey, jumping up. "You see I'm bent on disgusting you. I have. Joy! It serves you right. Now go and tell them all. Here comes Mr. Veere. I must send you away.

"Oh, Betsey, mayn't I stop and see him? I met him once."

"On my doorstep. I heard. No, I am afraid I must really ask you to go. Mr. Veere has a horror of meeting local people. I've promised never to let him run the risk of it, so you see——"

XXII

Veere passed Miss Simmons as she went out, and took not the slightest notice of her beyond giving her immensely too much room to pass him. His mien was so portentous that Ada Cox, in whom all the cords that tent-pegged her down to conventionality seemed to have snapped, walked into the room with him when she introduced him, and witnessed his greeting of her mistress.

Furthermore, he did not offer to shake hands with Betsey. She rose, startled, and Ada from behind exclaimed:

"There's something! You've got news!"

Veere did not seem to be aware that it was not Betsey who spoke. His teeth were set. He flung off his motor-coat, revealing the alert stripling imprisoned in the hoggish shape of custom. . . .

"Hasn't your faithful Whortleberry told you? The Home Secretary's commuted the sentence!"

It was Ada, her eyes bleared with the tears that were coming, who shouted, "What's that mean?"

He answered her. "Penal servitude, and a woman tied to him for life!"

Ada fell prone on the floor. Betsey, who had been standing with her hands down, knuckles firmly planted on the table, came round and helped Veere to pick the woman up.

"Oh, Wilfrid—Wilfrid—not to be hanged—not to be killed!" she moaned as she fell into complete unconsciousness.

"Brutes we are!" Veere murmured under his breath, as according to Betsey's concise directions he carried her upstairs. Ada's tragic unseeing eyes seemed to glare down at Betsey as her head dangled over the banisters.

"Oh, take care, take care!" Betsey murmured, shame-stricken, but indeed he was doing as well as he could.

"Keep Billy quiet!" she said to Veere when he left the room, having laid Ada on her bed.

The poor frightened child had followed them up. The door of the room where his mother lay was sharply closed, and Veere, sitting down on the stairs, took the boy on his knee.

"Billy! Billy!" he murmured.

He could think of nothing else to say. But Billy, fortunately, liked him, trusted him, and forthwith rammed his head between Veere's chin and breast and lay still so.

Veere reproached himself for his crudeness, shading into selfishness. He should have been less sudden in his revelation. He had been absorbed in the effect of this piece of intelligence on his and Betsey's fortunes; wondering so deeply how she would take it, and if she would still adhere to her plans of the other day; he had forgotten to be gentle with the other poor creature, whose heart was concerned in the salvation of Wilfrid Altamont, and to whom his news was so outrageously joyful that it should have been softened to her nerves, seared with long waiting and suspense. To Betsey it represented part of a mere business calculation—the reprieve was inopportune, untoward, but not of vital significance, since she cared for neither Wilfrid nor himself. He thought her cruel to Altamont . . . she was running counter to his own wishes . . . she was hard, as they said. . . .

The door of the bedroom opened and Betsey came out. Her eyes were blazing, her hair looked alive. At once all his love and passion returned at the sight of her. She beckoned to Billy.

"Go to your mother, Billy."

The child unwound his arms from Veere's neck and sidled into the room Betsey had vacated. She evidently introduced him and then closed the door on him.

"She's better now," Betsey said in a strange voice that he had never heard her use before. There was caution, too, in her walk as she approached him, and leaned on the banister at the stair-head. He was going to get up, but she signed to him to remain where he was.

That poor girl!" she said. "Do you realise that she fainted for joy? Joy! She adores my brute of a husband."

Her eyes narrowed. She looked down inquiringly at him.

"I suppose you're quite sure the news is true? Because if it isn't——"

"True as death, and far more horrible. Oh, Betsey, what will you do now? Tell me. Let me help. I'll do anything you like."

"Look here!"—she spoke roughly, permitting, at least not denying, his clasp of her knees as she stood over him. She made a violent dab at her chin with a handkerchief, then spoke with a rush—

"Do you still want me?"

"Of course I do."

"Then I'll come to you."

"D'ye love me, Betsey?" was his stiff, unaccountable answer. A deep wave of distrust washed over his love for this woman as she stood there, blushing, for the first time in his knowledge of her. He was actuated by a desire to probe her motives judicially, to sift them to the bottom once for all, while her soul stood naked before him and her cheeks blushed for her words of self-revelation. Then let the glamour steal over the beloved again, and he would give way to it. But he must know the truth, so far as she could tell him, first.

Betsey replied squarely, as he would have her.

"No. I feel to you as I always told you I did. Half and half. Nothing to speak of. As Miss Altamont felt to your uncle, perhaps? But I ask you now definitely if you want me? I have made up my mind. Fate's against me! I'll fight it. I will *not* be tied for life to a convict with twenty years or more to serve—and a woman here fainting for joy at the news that kills me. She's his real wife, as she'd have been his real widow. There! You can take me if you want me. I'm done with it all!"

"Then, with your gracious permission—" he said, rising, and taking her in his arms. The great dull clock at the stair-head ticked out the parcels of her surrender.

She lay there, blinking. She was pained by the irony piercing through the man's cynical phrase. She was soothed, as the slow seconds counted themselves out, by her intimate awareness of its overcoming by the glamour that she knew how to cast over the first embrace.

She did not know that Ernest Veere, permitting his inclination for her to have full sway, made at the same time a solemn reservation.

"You trust me, at least?" he asked, setting her on her feet again.

"Yes," she sighed. His kiss had moved her a little.

"It's a funny world, isn't it, my sweetheart? Well, come downstairs now, and help me on with my coat. I'll be with you again this evening to arrange things."

She demurred.

"Oh yes, they must be arranged. No tricks shall be played on you. I know you like people to be business-like. We shall see if your poor life is to be as maimed as you thought it would be. It all depends. Your ideal may be attained after all, some of it."

"What do you mean?" She laughed, but the light had all gone out of her face, which was a little puffy, and heavy, and the lips clumsier in curve. "She'll look like that when she's fifty," thought Veere, involuntarily. "Coarsish, like the old apple-woman who had a stall near my school."

She helped him on with his coat. She murmured; "What do you mean by talking of my ideal? I've smashed it up. I've promised to go to the dogs with you."

"That's what it's called, my dear." He shrugged into the sleeves.

"And that's what it is. Don't suppose I'm under any delusions as to what I've done. I've done it with my eyes open. The moment Ada fainted, I made up my mind to make you that proposal—and I have!"

"Yes, you did it and no mistake!" he answered, softly pinching her ear. Both speech and gesture had no relevance to his thought, and she felt it to be so. His frivolous attitude could not conceal a definite hardness concerning her, he was what a business customer might have called "nasty." He continued:

"You leave it to me, and don't be so cocksure about your own destruction. You've led the ass to the water, but are you so sure you can make him drink? Ass, I say. And obstinate at that! . . . Good-bye—for the present!"

He was going, she looked so like a chidden child that he returned, to kiss her.

"By Jove, you are a pretty woman, and I love you all the same! You'll always get me, this way. . . . Will you give me some dinner when I come back?"

"Are you coming back?"

"Yes, of course, why not? I said I was. That woman—" he indicated the room above, where Ada lay, "won't be about again to-night, will she?"

"No. I shall put her to bed, and give her some soup last thing." Her eyes questioned his.

"Had you rather I didn't come back?"

"No. . . . I have no feeling either way," she replied sturdily.

XXIII

It was early spring. Veere never missed April in England. He brought Betsey back from the Continent, where they had been travelling about for three months, and established her on his yacht, cruising in English waters.

Mrs. Altamont liked England better than Paris or even Sicily. She was glad to have seen these places, though. She never wanted to go abroad again, and she was thinking so, as she stood and sat and lounged on Cowes Pier. She had got them to row her in from the yacht to meet Veere, who had run up to London about some business, chiefly connected with her affairs, she believed, and who was reutrning by the Cowes boat, due even now.

He would have seen Ada Cox, left sole chatelaine of Worksop House and with Betsey's income to draw upon for herself and the children. It had been formally made over to her. The lease of Worksop House ran for a few years more, but Veere was going to dispose of the remainder, and Ada was to retain the sum accruing from that negotiation as well. By-and-by, Mrs. Altamont had arranged to go back to Ada for a short while to help her to "get out." Then the connection would cease.

Ada had been offered, and had accepted, the post of housekeeper, cicerone and caretaker at Angernoune Castle, which Sir Joris Veere had bought eight years ago as an experiment, in a highly dilapidated condition, from Lady Dobrée's father. Much money had been spent on it, the Keep, *tempo* William II., was bolstered up and rendered habitable. But that ancient fabric, it had been found, would not stand the introduction of electric lighting and dinner-lifts and other modern appliances, so a modern house, at fabulous cost, had been built in the courtyard, whence the flag flew when the family were in residence, and not enjoying the balmier airs of Mill Strand, Sir Joris's place in Sussex. The purchase of decrepit Angernoune was a millionaire's freak, an extravagance, a decided convenience to the vendors; yet the haughty impoverished nobleman who took his title from thence could never bear to accept Sir Joris Veere's repeated handsome offers of hospitality. He had, however, no objection to allowing his daughter to marry the heir thereof.

Ada, with her one surviving child—Little Katie had never

"growed" but had died while Veere and Betsey were abroad—meant to wait there for Wilfrid. The cold north had no terrors for the city girl, fixed, rapt in her mulish central idea. Niched up there, in a mediæval Keep, she would gain health, and look more picturesque than ever, while her boy would grow strong and hardy and defeat as far as possible any vicious inherited town instincts.

Mrs. Altamont's plans were of necessity vague. Not from a business point of view, indeed. She knew she was amply and solidly provided for. She and he had not minced the matter of the pecuniary basis of their alliance. Stock had been made over to her and invested in her name, she had an income for life—if she should leave Mr. Veere's protection to-morrow!

That night at Worksop House, when he came back and dined with her and they had settled things, she had been as hard as nails, almost rapacious in her determination to have the thing in black and white, something solid to depend on in this crumbling of her moral standards. Veere had almost hated her for a moment. The ugly joints of her character came uppermost, jogged forward with the violent rift in her self-respect. She meant, and showed that she meant, to sell herself dear.

And he had not exacted the *quid pro quo!*

* * * * *

Even in Paris, she had only half realised it. She was tired, he was forbearing, he was a dear.

They had been to see everything. They did monuments and plays together. He had bought her clothes and jewels. She had accepted them as one accepts gifts which one expects to have to repay in kind.

At the end of a week she asked him seriously to buy her no more presents, her income, of which she had already received an instalment, would, she averred coldly, suffice to dress her and pay for her cabs unless he was with her. Her tone was sour and strictly business-like.

He was not always with her. He treated her like a woman of the world, not as a pretty doll that he brought away to seduce. She was allowed to preserve her somewhat gloomy independence. He had friends in Paris, he preferred not to introduce her to them at all, to labelling her as his permanent companion. She did some of the monuments and some of the plays alone. He was never out of temper. They often talked of Dobrée.

In Italy she was happier. They led a life of errantry, riding about, bathing, mountaineering. Betsey was a frank tomboy; that side of her nature had been in abeyance too. Her hair,

warmed through and through by Italian sun, was more golden than ever. And the nice thing about Italy was that it was all new to Ernest too. They had adventures in Sicily, and after in Bosnia. Then when they reached England and got aboard, an exciting episode, which nearly resulted in the loss of the yacht off the tame little Needles, supervened. They had nearly died together, and yet, take it all in all, they were less intimate than they had been in those far back days when they had strolled about the streets of London together and scanned the posters for news of Betsey's deliverance.

That wretched, hasty moment on the stair-head, at Worksop House, had been a turning-point—which had decided nothing. Betsey's move towards the social abyss had been checkmated by her guardian knight. She was grateful to him in theory, irritated in fact by her insistent surmise as to whether it had cost him anything to keep her virtuous ? Betsey was vain.

She was waiting for him now, with several little rods in pickle for him, and only a lukewarm welcome. She found a sort of seat on the landing-stage and watched the boat ploughing its way to her. It held the man whose society pleased and delighted her, but whose attitude was a perpetual blister to her self-love.

The steward of the *Elisabetta* (renamed in compliment to her) approached and touched his cap.

" I came to tell you, madam, that there's nothing to prevent our getting off as soon as the skipper comes. The washing is in."

The Cowes boat made the pier. Veere was coming off, hurrying along the raying boards, slender, business-like, alert—he was two years younger than she.

" Here you are, Betsey ! I've settled everything. St. Malo—now ! We can get off this afternoon—has the washing come ? "

" Yes, Masters just told me so."

" That's good. Come down to Bingley's. I must get a few things. I've just remembered that I haven't any films."

" Yes ! " said Betsey agreeably. They turned and went off together, chatting amicably, like a husband and wife.

They were returning to the yacht for luncheon, their arms laden with odds and ends of marine stores, cigarettes, and films, when Betsey touched his arm :

" A lady, bowing and beckoning to you ! "

" Oh, I say ! Good luck ! It's Dobrée and her Miss Taylor.

His honest face radiant with good fellowship, he went forward to meet them, and Betsey fell back and studied a stationer's window.

Blind rage leaped up in her heart. She condemned it, yet it sprang up anew. She heard all they said.

"Oh, I say, Ernest, angel, lend me threepence! We are lunching at East Cowes Castle, and I've not got enough to pay for the tram boat across Medina."

"Here, take sixpence," said Veere. "It's awkward borrowing coppers of your hostess, however rich, to come back, isn't it? Where are you two staying?"

"On the *Godiva*, my godfather's yacht, you know. I say, where's that pretty woman got to that was with you? She's hidden herself somewhere! Oh, I suppose I oughtn't to ask?"

"Oh yes, you may *ask*."

"And you'll tell me she's a Mrs. Jones, wife of an old college friend! It isn't the person you've renamed your yacht after?"

"Oh, you twigged that, did you? Well, now be off to your lunch, and keep yourself respectable. Who is it has got East Cowes Castle this season?"

"Very rich Australians. Good-bye. We *may* come to tea with you—and the wife of Altamont."

"Shall have sailed!" Veere called after her as he rejoined Betsey, who came out from behind the sheltering eaves of Bingley's like a chidden child.

When they were in the dinghy, being rowed out to the *Elisabetta*, she said softly, playing with the fringed end of the tiller rope, "I wish you'd marry her *soon*."

"Who?"

"Lady Dobrée."

"Never was further from it in my life! Why do you say that sort of thing? You are always saying that sort of thing now."

"Am I a cross-patch?"

"Rather."

"I was nicer—in the Worksop House days, eh?"

"You were gayer."

"I was! I was! Isn't it funny! I suppose, if I'd been like this, an ill-tempered virago—as I am now—you'd never have wanted to take Andromeda away from her rock."

"I don't say that!"

He was casting about in his mind to say something more, his answer struck him as too sincere, but the end of the short trip had come, and he helped Betsey out and up. He gave her hand a little squeeze, and said, "Come and smoke a cigarette."

"No, I think I'll go to my cabin now, and have a real good cry, till after we've started!"

He laughed. "Nerves! You! Did the meeting with our young friend upset you?"

"Yes, rather. I believe I wanted you to grasp your nettle and introduce me. After all, I'm quite respectable, bating the little fact that I'm the wife of a convict."

"Oh, she'd rather like that. But the other thing—I couldn't have persuaded her of it, at any rate."

"Doesn't she know you're a crank?"

"Not to that extent!"

"Nor did I," Betsey just breathed, as she ran down the companion and bade the steward, whom she met below, bring her a glass of wine and some biscuits to her cabin for lunch. She meant to lie down till they were off.

Veere heard her close the skylight of her state-room, she did not mean him to hear her cry—if she cried?—then! Her expressed determination to do so did not disturb him much; he thought it rather nice of her to announce a cataclysm of nerves and set a limit to it. She was given to having nerves now, it was a new phase. What she said was true enough. She was not nearly so good-tempered as she used to be. She had a tongue and she used it on him sometimes—her benefactor!

He was her benefactor—not her lover. A busy, bustling, hustling man, he was not sufficiently versed in the ways of women to realise that his attitude was the goad that drove Betsey's tongue, and made her occasionally smite him whom she should have spared.

He was more or less happy, which was all he ever expected to be. He was a materialist and a crank. It is your idealists, your conventional moralists who cannot be happy with a woman without seducing her. He was neither nervous nor excitable; his emotions waited on his fancies. Betsey had "huffed" him too deeply, that moment, two months ago, on the stairs, when in despite of Fate she had flung herself at him and said: "Take me, yet believe me I have no pleasure in the giving."

His positive domineering nature bore her some malice. She had made a moral convenience of him.

XXIV

They went down to dinner in the little state-room. Her eyes were as bright as if she had not carried out her threat, while the mind behind them was full of cross motives that chased each other hither and thither, and peeped in and out of its recesses like black and white cats in a suburban garden.

She sat down with a little air of furtive wildness that was charming. There was a streak of blue ribbon in her hair and the steward and Veere thought they had never seen her look so well. The pocket of Veere's smoking-jacket bulged with papers.

"We'll go over these papers after dinner," he said as soon as Masters had left the room. "But it's all done, and all done right. You're a woman of means, like Miss Altamont of famous memory!"

These were the little things he said that jarred, and at once evoked the protecting motherly instinct in the woman of tact. She did not know that Lady Dobrée had once remarked that if Veere hadn't been so clever, he'd have been a bounder, but with far less knowledge of the world than that possessed by the green girl of rank, Betsey realised that sentiment, which Veere disdained, is tact's best ally, and that the strenuous life of business is too apt to brush aside the thin cobwebs of tradition that would cloak and veil for us half life's inevitable grossnesses. "Life *is* ugly, life is earnest. And the *smart* is not its goal!" was a parody she was fond of making. But she answered, complying with him:

"How much have I now?"

"Fifteen hundred a year secured to you — safe from all interference from me, even if we quarrel."

"How perfectly hateful it sounds!" She tried to thank him but could not, her lips framed the pettish exclamation instead. "Anyhow, Miss Altamont would have approved. A thousand a year, which I shall retire on when you have married Lady Dobrée, though after all I've nothing to retire from! I'm not earning my salary."

"Don't talk like that!"

She could shock him easily. He could not shock her.

Masters came back into the room, and she asked Veere a colourable indifferent question: "When is Ada going to Angernoune?"

"August."

"Shall I go there and stay with her?"

"Yes, do," said he calmly, though it was the first time the idea had been mooted by the wayward woman. "It would be all right. I rather wanted you to. Let me tell you about it. There are practically two complete houses standing in the courtyard. That is big enough to enclose a whole township, and did, in the Middle Ages. The old Keep is where Ada will live, and keep it clean—with help from the village, of course—and show it on Thursdays. That was the arrangement in my uncle's

time. Then there's the completely modern building he built opposite—an act of vandalism, and Veere's Folly they called it; I never can see the harm, personally, but then I've got no taste."

"I think it's a cursed thing to remove landmarks!"

"Why—if they're so crocky they can't stand up, let alone habitable? The old people were just like me, Betsey, if you only think of it! They never scrupled to pull about or pull down the old and insanitary or even the too small to hold them. They'd have laughed in your face if you'd talked to them about the Preservation of Ancient Buildings Society—thought it all your eye and your d—d cheek! They considered that they had ideas of their own quite as good as the ideas of the previous man."

"Oh, once you go back to mediæval times, they *were* as good. The ages of Faith, you know. Men without a religion can't have an architecture."

"Tosh, dear! It's got nothing to do with it. You've been reading Ruskin."

"Among others. But I do think the spirit of the age—and you've got it finely exemplified—is antagonistic to beauty. Inventions for stupid, selfish, besotted comfort—hideous mouldings by the piece—creaky doors to not fit anywhere—and all your minds given up to labour-saving appliances——"

"The old people hadn't to think of saving labour when they'd got slaves. Thomas of Lancaster put thousands of men on to the neighbouring castle, Kymarays. You shall go and see it. Wish we had 'em now, instead of these Trades-Union-ridden, uppish, brawling masses we have to work with!"

"Don't, Ernest. I happen to know you are awfully good to your men and they adore you."

"Have to be! Well, to resume. There we have these two complete dwelling houses connected by an underground passage. When Uncle Joris had one of his big, dull house-parties, I used to have a bed in the Keep—in the haunted room for preference. I'll go there this time. Dobrée and her little lot wouldn't care to dig me out there, and stick my sheets together with acid drops, even in the daytime. She's got no moral pluck at all. She's afraid of ghosts."

"When is she coming?"

"Well, you see—did I tell you?" He went on, without waiting for the reply which, indeed, she was not minded to give, for it was in the affirmative and would have muzzled his further explanation she longed to hear. "I asked her long ago to play hostess for me in the home of her ancestors for the month of August. Do you mind?"

"No, of course not! She was invited before me," replied Betsey sedately. "And I don't see very well how we could clash—I in the old house, and she in the new."

She looked across the table at him, using all the power of appeal of which her eyes were capable. "I would so like to beg a promise of you. May I? Say at once if you think you can't do it?"

"You sweet baby! What?"

"Promise you won't propose to her while I am there—if I do settle to come."

"I'll promise that, easily—if you on your side will faithfully promise to come," said he. "And—do you think I shall ever propose to her at all? I'm very half-hearted. A month's reign at Angernoune along of me might choke her off from caring to reign there altogether. You know I don't love her. She knows it—or she will. And when the sacrifice is consummated I see myself flying out of our big receiving house in Belgravia or Bloomsbury to have tea with you in your little nest in Brompton—or perhaps you'll choose Kensington?"

She gave a little moan—of disgust, discomfiture, alienation. He was really rather trying.

"Ernest," she spoke severely, "I'll ask you one question, without prejudice, mind! Why, if you don't care for Lady Dobrée more than that, do you *dare* to contemplate marrying her?"

"Shall I tell you?" he said, "and then you'll see that you've known the answer to your own question all along? I am ambitious. For ambition I would sacrifice anything, even love. I'd certainly sacrifice Love. One passion's as good as another. There are only three that really move the world. Ambition, Revenge, and Love. I choose Ambition for my ruling one."

"You make a mistake."

"You say that because you're a woman. Women haven't got beyond Love yet. I can see what Dobrée is. I can see that, try as I might, I *couldn't* make her unhappy. So why shouldn't I marry her and improve my own position, which I care about as an actor cares about his art or a politician his party? By the way, I should stand for Angershire. Dobrée will get that for me, and I shall get her the money she wants—quite nicely, you know, but it's in the Angernoune blood. They are Norman peasants *au fond* and money's their god. Dobrée, personally, is not exigeant. Give her a child and a couple of motor-cars and she'll be as happy as the day is long."

"No. *Au fond* she is like other women, once you're married

to her, she won't stay a schoolgirl! The baby—or the car—will bring her on. Then—where Love isn't, Jealousy rushes in, and instead of helping you in your schemes she may hinder you. Now I've done. You said it might be without prejudice."

She had saddened him. He fiddled with the spoons on the table. Masters came and deposited a coffee-maker in full blast. He spoke.

"Of course, without prejudice. Perhaps you're right? One has to take risks, and marriage is the biggest gamble of all. I'm getting commonplace, am I not? Anyhow, I'm with *you* now—you, my chosen companion—the woman who's never bored me once since I've known her."

"A 'dead cert' of amusement," she said bitterly. "Well, I must play up, I suppose, or else you'll complain of me. You did to-day, I remember."

"No, Betsey, I should love you if you cut your hair off and preached all the time, so be as cross as you like."

"Love me—do you say?" she asked with wistful contempt.

"Well, inferior being that I am, crassly material, you do stand for Love with me!"

"The passion you rank after Ambition and Revenge!"

"No, not quite that!" he whispered. "Let me kiss you, and see?"

"No, I won't let you play with fire," she said with a forced laugh.

"Fire?"

"I am fire, for the present."

"Are you? Yes, by Jove, you are, a regular burning bush! Only—such a pal as well!"

"Yes, I'm here, alone with you. I dare say you find it rather trying, but Lady Dobrée's interests must be safeguarded." She busied herself with the coffee.

He was silent. She could not know that he was thinking of Dobrée, in her conventionally cut dress that formally exhibited a brief section of her chest—somehow one could not think of it as her breast! He had never seen Betsey except in a high black gown such as she wore now.

"Why do you never wear a low-necked dress?" he asked her suddenly.

"Because I've never in my life had occasion to wear one," said she, in as bitter a tone as she had ever used. The answer revealed at once the depths of the suburban horror she had suffered. "I have never been asked out to proper dinner in my

life, and I wasn't going to bother to dress for a few scrubby Town Hall concerts."

"The pathos of that!" He laughed. "It is the whole Book of Job in a sentence. Now I see why you were so keen to come out and live——"

"With you?"

"I suppose no one has ever told you that you are ten times more charming *en Cinderella?* I am sure it is so, at any rate, though I've never seen you *décolleté*. That plain dress of soft black, like a nun's, except that you've no wimple and that your round white neck rises firm and straight from it like a pillar—of alabaster, shall I say?"

"I hate frills and horse-collars," said she, blushing at his praise. "And I suppose my neck is self-supporting because I don't put it in stays. Never did. The kettle boils!" She began to pour out the coffee. "See how my hand shakes! I'm as nervous as a cat. I cried dreadfully this afternoon. I believe you are right. These prolonged *tête-à-tête* between a man and a woman generally lead to nerves and neurasthenia and so on. I've got it in my arm, all down. That's why, I suppose, dull stupid marriage is found to be the best arrangement for spacing out one's raptures. Sugar?"

XXV

Angernoune Keep, like a grey-haired respectable man of science, caught and hemmed in by a gathering of smart modern people, stood isolated, bewildered, and mediæval in the vast courtyard, opposite the sophisticated Gothic of the new Dwelling House. Grass no longer grew from the roof of the tower, shorn of its battlements. Battlements had been supplied, the grass had been tidied away; but the white cockle-shells of pilgrims still dotted the lower courses of the north wall, and Ada's boy, standing on the pediment, used to try in vain to pull them out of the mortar, welded together by the traditions of Roman science.

Modern and old seemed to stand and hate each other; the young sneered, the old frowned. The boy linked them, playing quietly round the low Norman doorway that gave entrance into the Keep, but longing child-like to pull the shiny electric bell fixed in the modern oak portal of the Dwelling House. Billy was growing healthy, he had no dislike of the strong sea blast that drove perpetually round the corner of the lone Keep, and tossed his hair, and kept him in continual disarray. It lifted, too, the white locks of Boris, the great Newfoundland, who

couched and curveted all day on the tiny lawn whence sprang the carefully husbanded ivy that was supposed to soften the angles of the Dwelling House. Nothing clothed the squareness of the Keep, the north wind took care of that.

It was difficult to be complicated in a place like this. The wife of Altamont, maimed by suburbanity and short views, imagined her cribbed and cabined thoughts to unroll like banners in this noble wind; the clear air revealed the deeps, and the deeps were pure and translucent, after all.

She was glad she had come. She thought that, if that great change called marriage really should enter into Veere's fortunes, that winter, she would choose to remain here with Ada. She, then, would be naught but a wounded animal, and the Keep at Angernoune would be the lair to which she would creep wherein to sit and nurse her sorrow.

The guardroom, as it was called, which comprised nearly the whole ground floor, was dark and soothing, the windows, mere slits for archers to shoot from, could hardly illumine the low-pitched, arched roof, whence all remnants of the authentic plaster of the time had been scraped off by the hand of the restorer, leaving the deeply pitted surface that had held it so well. The floor's covering of stout hempen matting muffled the feet of outsiders coming in. Betsey chiefly habited this part, leaving the kitchen and housekeeper's room that had been carved out of it to Ada and her child. During her visit, she agreed to relieve the less well-informed woman of her job of showing the Keep on Thursdays, a task which the latter detested. But Betsey did it *con amore*. She got up her facts carefully, from some old county histories which she found upstairs. Ada had not been expected to do more than render herself mistress of the sixpenny guide that lay by the Visitors' Book. Local antiquaries, visiting the Castle with their friends, set down the pretty intelligent woman's attention to their words as a mark of intelligence, and posted her in many a recondite fact which she was able to retail again. She became quite an accredited cicerone in Angershire, where the castle of Angernoune was the staple of antiquarian discussion and interest.

Ada must of course resume her duties as soon as Veere should join Lady Dobrée's party. It came numerous, eager and bustling on the first of September, in motors, and bus loads, with lorries for its belongings, and thin maids and stout maids, and one hairdresser—Lady Blessington's.

Betsey in the indulgence of her boundless curiosity, so strangely divested of morbidity, disinfected as it were by the holy airs of

Angershire, showed them all over the antique structure they pretended so cleverly to be interested in. They did not notice the exceptionality of the cicerone, perhaps her beauty was not quite so glaring ; she had grown thinner, paler, sharper featured, and attracted less superficial observation than she would have done a year ago. Before opening the door she always peered through a side loop-window, mounting up into the embrasure the better to ascertain that Veere did not form one of the party seeking admittance. He was pledged to write and tell her when he was on his way. He was detained for the present in Town by some rather tiresome business, relative to his succession to his uncle's fortune. But she knew him, he was the sort of person who might motor down without the slightest warning, on a sudden impulse. That is, if the impulse to see her again should become too strong.

She had his heart—such as it was.

Lady Maude Erskine-Robertson visited the Keep, escorted by the novelist, Lee-Brice. They looked all over together, but Lady Maude soon tired of Lee-Brice's real and insulting interest in antiquities and cried off.

" I promised Vallance to have a game of tennis with him," she declared as soon as they got on to the roof, " and I see him down there on the common, actually—waiting for me and letting his moustache droop and looking miserable."

" Yes, they said there was a view up here ! " answered Lee-Brice, without sarcasm. " Let us go down."

Betsey piloted them past the haunted room, which she never showed to visitors if she could help. It was Veere's room, and she slept in it. They got to the bottom of the stairs ; she had felt the novelist's eyes in her back as they went down, and was not surprised when he whispered to her at the door, " I'm coming back."

" Like Gilderoy in the ballad ! " she thought, laughing, as she waited. She wondered if she would be called upon to reel off any more facts about Angernoune, or if he was like his books ? She could take care of herself, even with the author of *The Red Corpuscles*.

He wanted no more facts, and yet he was not in the least like his books. He sincerely wanted to gloat on antiquity, to feel the atmosphere of mediævalism. He knew more about Angernoune than she could tell him, and though he had probably got it all up from the County History in the smoking-room of the Dwelling House, he managed, with literary sleight of hand, to reissue it with the imprint of his own personality. He did not

flirt with Mrs. Altamont, not so much as by the turn of an eyelid, but she had a subtle sense that he had come back to study her.

He left her, with a consciousness of power suggested by his reticence, his pointed imperial, and his record of expurgation, and which he seemed to take pride in falsifying. There was nothing squalid, nothing morbid, nothing passionate about him. His pose was perfect. She enjoyed his visit.

Lady Dobrée had a maid—of sorts—she wasn't what either Betsey or Ada considered a proper maid. "More like a dresser at a theatre," Ada said, and Ada knew. For Betsey, she had her uses. She manœuvred it. Miss Parker and Mrs. Cox, they knew not why or how, struck up a friendship, and sometimes, after dinner and when the wind was not too cold, the former would potter across and ring the bell of the doorway in the Keep, for the key of the underground door of communication between the two buildings had been lost. Betsey knew who had it in his safe keeping. Ada, her Billy safe tucked up in bed, would be sitting, mending, sewing, Betsey dreaming, playing endless patiences, to soothe her mind before she slept. . . . The woman's talk was all, as Betsey had supposed it would be, about her mistress, and incidentally, about Mr. Veere. The second time she came in to see them, she began, as usual, with a long competent sigh of satisfaction, to con her own perfections and business value.

"I don't know, I'm sure, whatever my lady would do without me!"

"She always looks very nice," said Mrs. Cox politely.

"I'm proud to say she does, but she wouldn't last a day if it wasn't for me washing and mending her. Not that she's not neat, she's got it in her, she's not like Lady Maude, overfond of shoving things on—but would you believe it, Mrs. Cox, that poor girl, for all she's a title, hasn't got more than a couple o' pair of silk stockings to her name? And the ladders that come in them along of the suspenders, you know, it takes me half my time mending them! And washing her veils—chiffon will wash, but it rightly ought to be cleaned. But, gracious, we can't run to so many cleaner's bills! And her gloves—by rights a lady oughtn't to wear darned gloves—but I'll defy you to see my darns! I join the long ones at the wrist same as the girl at the shop showed me——"

"It's very good of you, isn't it?" said Betsey.

"Well, I put my back into it, so to speak, when they engaged me. 'Twas my first place. I wasn't so particular. I took a fancy to her, a sporting chance. I said, I'll see if I can't get her married

all off my own bat, and a nice husband to pay for her things. Maids bring these things off, more than you know. With a little help from other ladies, that take an interest to begin with—for reasons, mind you! I'll tell you a secret. Lady Maude's got a bet on it. Last season we had several of Maude's own dresses. Her maid didn't like it at all, I can tell you, seeing those good clothes go past her! She's a fool, that Chaytor! I shouldn't allow it if I were her. I mean to have my lady's wardrobe when she's married. I deserve it, I think, don't you? It'll be worth while. I'm never going to leave her—not an Earl's daughter like her, who's under obligations to one. And Mr. Veere's the kind of man who wouldn't have me chucked.'

"Mr. Veere?" said Betsey, with a mute appeal in her eyes to Ada to ask the necessary question. Ada played up:

"Is your lady marrying Mr. Veere, then?

"Some time in December, I believe. The day ain't settled, for the Earl don't want it announced till—I'm sure I don't know what it is exactly—something about business. Mr. Veere's business. Seems as if he was in some sort of hole—something that'll pass off. He's a queer sort of man, though he's rich."

"Is he odd?" Again Ada spoke. Betsey vowed gratitude.

"Well, it's an uncomfortable sort of business—not my idea of an engagement, somehow! He's just as nice to everybody as he is to her, and more so. She cries about it sometimes, and she was never a crier! It's my belief he's never kissed her properly, except once when he proposed—in the drawing-room of our flat, and Lady Maude was there, actually, in the room! They call themselves modern, and that, but if you don't hole-and-corner over an engagement, when do you? And an Earl's daughter, too—so off-hand, not treating her respectful, I think!"

"It seems a queer way to manage things," Ada remarked. "But I say this; if he don't care to kiss her or to be with her alone at all, it won't come to nothing."

"Well, he gave her an engagement ring. They went and bought it themselves. He gave Lady Maude cart-blank. It's a queer sort of stone, an archimandrite they call it, green by day and red by night—not a proper engagement ring at all. And although the engagement isn't announced, she can wear it fast enough, for no one would ever take it for an engagement ring, I say."

"Why isn't the engagement to be announced?" said Mrs. Altamont, whose voice shook.

"I told you, didn't I? There's what you call a Pretender. Mr. Brooks was telling me, saying that the late Sir Joris Veere

was married after all, and that the fellow claims he can prove it. The business is a company now—they can't stop Mr. Veere being one of the managers, but his legacy and the places—it's a lot of money to change hands, isn't it, if Mr. Veere was to lose his case ? "

" I should be sorry," said Ada with simple emphasis, " Mr. Veere's been kind to me—putting me in here, and all."

" It isn't at all likely. Mr. Brooks says the other man hasn't a ghost of a chance. Just good money wasted—his bringing the action, but he's going to have a try for it, I'm told. Would he keep you on, Mrs. Cox ? Oh, I expect so ! Good for you if he does. You've got a nice place of it, haven't you ? Nothing to do but spin a tale about the old place once a week to the people who come. And visitors too, as much as you like. Your friend here is getting a nice blow, after London. You're a Londoner, aren't you, Mrs. ——"

" Mrs. Adamson. I'm Mrs. Cox's sister-in-law."

" And I'm sure I hope it will do you good. You don't look well, for all you've got such a nice colour. Rather nervous, aren't you ? Circulation not very good, I expect. Do you get chilblains ? My lady does—cruel, in the winter, and a bit of a red nose too, at times. We have to be very careful ! "

" Yes, I saw her come home from riding yesterday with a nose the colour of beetroot," said poor Betsey.

Ada thought the little ebullition of spite dangerous, and lest Miss Parker resented it, hastened to add :

" She looks nice in the saddle."

" Yes. She's only just taken to that since she's been engaged. Mr. Veere stood her the lessons and gave her the horse. But he's never rode with her. Mr. Lee-Brice does now—in the Park. Isn't he a fine figure of a man ? "

Betsey cordially agreed. She had had enough. She withdrew her magnetism, and soon the loquacious creature took her departure and was literally blown across the courtyard, with her mincing London steps.

XXVI

Betsey, pondering in her little haunted bedroom, where she had gone anxiously after Miss Parker's departure to ascertain if that lady's remarks about her circulation bore the further implication of a red nose, absolved Ernest Veere from any double dealing in the matter of his engagement. He ha proposed to Lady Dobrée before coming to Angernouned while Betsey was absorbed in the task of getting rid of Worksop, House

in Ada's interest and selling the furniture. She had been too busy to see him. 'Twas loneliness had tossed him to Lady Dobrée's breast. He had been, moreover, practically engaged to the girl at a date prior to their first meeting in Charlton churchyard. . . .

It was sharp practice, though. She could not sleep, but lay tangled in her golden hair, crying through it, stifling her sobs in it, drawing meshes of it across her burning eyes.

Half-way through the night her dismay culminated in an access of hysteria. She sobbed and shrieked and bit her pillow. Then she sat up, leaned forward and touched old Ginger, the cat, that professional soother of the *ménage* of Worksop House, who lay curled up at the foot of her bed. He murmured pellucid response, a loving gurgle—no more. It comforted her a little. It was her one reaching out for sympathy.

Ada, who knew her heart, also knew better than to console.

Next day, Betsey took Billy and went to the Harker Rocks to get shells. She and the little boy went barefoot, paddling in and out of the little pools, like eyes with lids of yellow sand, that lie in the crevices of the long reefs of basaltic rocks half a mile from Angernoune. Walking like this, the distance was as good as doubled. Billy with his short legs might get tired, so she presently anchored him at a single-handed game in one of the eight little sandy coves that lie at the Harker Rocks, each one hidden from, and as beautiful as the other. She had no hat—she seldom wore one—and she had let her hair down, half savage, half swagger, and left her hairpins in charge of Billy, while she prospected a little, to find what shells might linger in the next bay, having thoroughly explored this one.

She came suddenly upon Mr. Lee-Brice, his great length stretched out full as he pored over the golden sand, intent on the same innocent quest as herself. Betsey stopped, looking down on him, a little but not deeply confused. . . .

He thought he had never seen—or imagined—such lovely feet, with nails as pink and polished as the tiny winged shells he was even now collecting, prying them out of the fine fringe of coal that lay like a moustache on the lips of the strand. He gazed at the fair feet boldly, they were nearer to his line of vision than her face. And they were at least as beautiful.

Lee-Brice was a man of tact. He did not at any time outrage conventionality, he treated it cavalierly, and knew how to be indiscreet without indiscretion. Rising to his full height, dignified, graceful, easy, for he was a man in his prime, he addressed Betsey, after due pause for consideration of her beauty. He did not call her goddess ; with royal facility he remembered her name :

"Mrs. Adamson, have you ever seen this shell? It is very rare." He held it out to her, giving its Latin name.

"No, never. I didn't know you were a——"

"Conchologist?"

"—As well as a novelist." She got out the little complimentary phrase with a shyness that charmed him, and continued to charm him as she went on: "I have read your novel. I've got a copy."

"Have you, indeed? Then stick to it," he said laughing. "You know what happened to that book?"

"Yes. It *was* a shame! We all talked of nothing else at——"

"Where?"

"Where I lived."

"There are three copies in the Castle, then," said he, respecting her reticence, though, author-like, he would have enjoyed hearing the data for his popularity. "Lady Maude Erskine-Robertson—the lady I 'shed' the other day and came back to see over the Castle properly with you—has one, and Lady Dobrée de Saye."

"It isn't a book for her at all."

"You are quite right. But the young girls of the present day are too quick for us. They seem to shin up the ladder of the Impossible and Improper while we still have but one foot on the lower rungs. Luckily, the younger they are, the less it hurts them. You see they have not begun to think in colour yet. . . ."

"How do you mean?"

"As a line drawing, or a Flaxman outline, to a Titian, or a Tintoretto is the young girl's consciousness—do you understand me? Lines have no corporeality. Nature has no outlines, only washes of colour blocked in, grey or gorgeous as the case may be. Virtue in the next block to sin, is only demarcated by delicate differences of hue. So only you may know water from wine, the lamb from the wolf—and the last two lie down together, in society at least."

"Then if only one's mind is like those empty whitewashed paddocks one sees at railway stations before you put the sheep and the goats in them, one can read your novels with impunity?"

"Yes, as long as you remain unable to fill up the blanks or put words for the asterisks! But enough of my contributions to contemporary literature. Tell me, do you know that charming fellow, our host, who is engaged to supply the colour-scheme for Lady Dobrée? Pure accident!"

She winced. "Yes. I have spoken to him. Why do you say their engagement is pure accident?"

"Because I met him at a man's dinner the night before Maude Erskine-Robertson faked that engagement, and I never knew a man less likely to make a woman an offer next day."

"Did he think in line only then, too?"

"No not exactly. . . . He was describing to me the type he admired, and it wasn't hers. It was far more like yours. . . . He considers Romney's Lady Hamilton to be the highest female type of beauty."

"In his cups only," said she quickly. "And anyhow, that's no guide. Men who admire the fair type always marry dark women, just as women swear they like a clean-shaven man, and then go and marry an imperial! When is Mr. Veere due to come here?"

"This afternoon."

"No, is he?"

"Yes, he wired suddenly to the butler—old Brooks—do you know him? And Lady Dobrée wanted the motor, both motors, in fact, to go over to Kelso. So he's to be met in the 'bus. Poor Veere, who simply can't bear crawling!"

"Yes, I do think he might have been allowed to have one of his own conveyances to bring him to his own place," she replied nervously to this amiable man. They had walked on and now they came to the shielded cove where Billy's intent head could be seen. He was having a dinner-party of shells on a bit of smooth golden sand. The ugly part of wading—shoes and stockings, of which the prettiest exemplars will look squalid, deprived of their context, lay near him: his and Betsey's. Lee-Brice tactfully touched his hat and was making off, when a cry of the heart arrested him.

"You little villain, what have you done with all my hair-pins? I left them here on this bit of rock——"

"I made 'em all into boats and fish-hooks," said Billy, thus objurgated and mildly shaken. "And they wouldn't float and they're at the bottom of the pool."

"Which pool?"

The child indicated a neighbouring cranny, deep and secret, and Lee-Brice came to the rescue.

"I'll dredge them up for you, while you put on your shoes and stockings again, if I may?"

Five minutes later he reappeared, with a small handful of hairpins, to find Betsey clothed, shod, and demure, but with her lovely hair still spread over her shoulders.

"Are these all?" he asked.

"Enough to work the ship, I dare say," said Betsey, using

them with celerity. Lee-Brice watched her, appreciatively, but not impertinently, and finally proposed to walk home with her.

His dripping shirt-cuff, earned in her service, was a strong argument in favour of her acceptance of his escort; besides it was not like Betsey to object, although her heart was torn in two by the news that had been given her the night before by Lady Dobrée's maid, and the excitement of an imminent meeting with Veere. She never disdained the present for the future, or one man for another.

As luck would have it, Veere, in his horrid fusty 'bus, drove past them in the village. He saw Betsey and the author delicately stepping it along the road up to the Castle, but scrupled to follow his first cordial impulse to get out and join them in their walk up the hill. He betrayed it, however, by a quick forward movement of his hand to the check-string. He thought better of it, and falling back he nodded to them both and was slowly bowled on.

Betsey was in a silent flutter. Mr. Lee-Brice, who noticed it, began to converse with judgment, and an absence of direct questioning. "The charm of Ernest Veere's face," he observed, "lies in his open yet cute smile. He always, somehow, reminds me of cutlery—of some serviceable tool, shiny, smooth, and pre-eminently efficient."

"Would it be a bradawl?" inquired Betsey, laughing. She was terribly excited. She did not care what names she called Veere. She was to see the beloved bradawl in a short while—an hour, two hours—at all events, that very evening.

"He's an extraordinarily clever young fellow," pursued the author. "It's almost a pity he's got all that money—he might have done so much without it!"

"What, for instance?"

"Married the right woman, for one thing! A woman who would have nothing to 'get over' in him!"

"What has Lady Dobrée to get over? He doesn't eat peas with his knife, I suppose?"

"Of course not! He's all right in those things. Something far more subtle than that. You're quite clever enough to understand. He jars, believe me. It's so funny to watch them."

"Quite a privilege!" replied Betsey sourly. "Poor Mr. Veere!"

She was talking commonplaces. He was carrying her into fields where her natural wit had no play. She herself was too rough and ready to faithfully envisage those pitfalls imminent in daily intercourse with Lady Dobrée and her set which beset the

self-made man, and Lee-Brice missed her sure-footed criticisms and comments on the kind of workaday life she knew best. He did not choose to let her wallow any more in sloughs of incompetent spite. She was a very pretty thing and deserved her millionaire, whom he would help her to get, furthering at the same time a not altogether inchoate scheme of his own.

Half an hour later, the unused key grated in the door that connected the smart Dwelling House with the stern Keep, and he was with Ada, herself, and Billy. He was cheerful.

"Good luck! They're across the border and away, I hear. So I've got my freedom till dinner-time."

"I think she ought to have stayed to receive you, when she knew you were coming!" Betsey said.

"Rather not! I purposely misled her. She didn't know I was coming till to-morrow. I arranged it all with Brookie. How do you like Brookie, Betsey? He's an old faithful dear, isn't he? Yes, Billy, my son, that's for you—and this! And this is for your mother!"

"Oh, thank you, sir—indeed," said Mrs. Cox. "And for Billy too." She took her son's hand and negligently left the room. Lately she had grown a delicate sense of not being wanted.

"Well, Elisabetta, are you happy here? I needn't ask. I saw you escorted by the greatest novelist of the day up the hill, I saw your golden hair shining in the setting sun—very casually, but effectively, done up. And so did he, you bet! The cheek of you—wearing no hat! Well, at any rate you're having a good time, and I'm delighted to see it! Do you like the lamb-like author?"

"Mr. Lee-Brice has very nice modest manners, hasn't he?" she said demurely, "for a man who writes books that—well, books that every gentleman's library should be without!"

"Ha ha! A very decent chap all the same, don't you think? And a regular Crœsus. Why, the royalties on his book alone——"

"The one they've suppressed?"

"No, he doesn't get any more on that. But the one before—the one they made a play of—that brings him in a few good thousands a year. I declare he's a better *parti* than I, if only the fair Dobrée's advisers would let her see it. Especially now, when I don't know if I mayn't be chucked out of house and home by the turn of the law!"

"The law! It's not cleverness needed to prove it, but right. Either that pretender is your uncle's son or he isn't."

"I believe he's faked a register or something. And if the finding is on his side, I shall only have my wits."

"They're excellent ones. Mr. Lee-Brice says that you could do anything you liked. He even says that you would do better without any money at all!"

The cute smile glittered. "Does he expect me to make a handsome present of my wealth to any one? To him, say? Then he could marry Dobrée. Is that what he's after?"

"But I thought you were going to marry Lady Dobrée?" she asked innocently. "Every one about here says you are?"

"That's the idea!" he replied uneasily. Was she going to reproach him for his engagement, and the march he had stolen on his promise? He cared so much for her opinion on everything, more than for that of any other person in the world, excepting himself, that he was actually driven in his own despite to ask her in so many words what she thought of the step he had taken.

She primmed her full sweet lips; it was a little drop of balm in the draught of bitterness, and she enjoyed it to the full.

But Veere hated any approximation, on the lips of a woman dear to him, to the disturbing smile of Mona Lisa. "Are you quite sure you don't object to anything?" he insisted curtly.

"To what? Everything's quite nice here, I think. Good air—lovely sands, only I wish they had run to electric light in the Keep!"

"No, no, my engagement, I mean. I had to settle that in London——"

"Before you got here? Practical, as ever."

He gave her up. "Practical, yes, and so is the girl's father—Won't have it announced until the Pretender is disposed of. Full of schedules and mortgages and what not. Oh, they're an awful lot! She's the bright spot in the family. Would you believe it, he doesn't like me to take her name!"

"He's right. A Norman name wouldn't suit you at all!"

"Now that's the first delightful bit of spite you've shown, Betsey. It quite warms the cockles of my heart! But I'm afraid, my dear, it will have to be, for I mean to stick to that point and get my own way. I shall have old Angernoune under my thumb as soon as the gentleman calling himself Ernest Louis Veere is safely disposed of, as he will be. We've retained the best heads in England. We can't fail. And I shall be a cad with a Norman name. And am I a cad, Betsey?"

"I've heard people call you a bounder."

"Oh, I say!"

"It's not so bad as cad, that you're trying to call yourself. It doesn't, at any rate, mean anything dishonourable."

"One who bounds, merely. Do I bound, Betsey? I should have thought I was too busy. Too hard-worked. Not self-indulgent enough. Besides that wretched word's often the last arrow in the quiver of people who are too slack, too weakly, too fastidious to get on. It's such an easy thing to say—the sort of reproach you hurl at a Labour Member with a majority of two hundred behind him! You see after all I come back to the House—I can't get away from the House. I must be in it. I can't settle down to be a mere manufacturer with a headpiece like mine. My head's got to get me into the House, with a little adroit jockeying of social values, and Earl's daughters thrown in. Betsey, isn't it a fair game? They're pretty overweening, one has the right to get the better of them, don't you think? Say so, if you can!"

"I should think it quite fair if only you were prepared to give rather better value for your title. I don't mean money, I think you'll be generous about that, but I mean that poor little Lady Dobrée wants something more."

His head dropped on to his hands.

"Betsey, I can't. Positively, I can't. And that's the weak, the mean point in my scheme."

"Is it me?" she asked frankly. "For if it is, I could go?"

"No, I desire you as a woman, if you must have it, but I hold on to you still more as a pal. Don't desert me, please. You would do her no good, and you'd send me off my head, I believe Stay here, and let me come and talk it over with you sometimes, as I am doing now. I am quite good and amenable, don't you think I am? You must admit I don't persecute you by making love to you? Since I can't—mayn't—I am resigned to see Lee-Brice doing it, or any other fellow you like to take on."

"Yes, you let me manage my own affairs—of the heart. But now tell me, would you like to explain how you came to take the plunge, and then I can see if Mr. Lee-Brice was speaking the truth?"

"Oh, did he talk about it, the beggar?"

"No, you talked to him. You mentioned the type of beauty you happened to admire."

"Yours, of course," said the young man simply. "But I hope he hasn't twigged?"

"Oh no. You said too many kind things for the portrait to be recognised. I've gone off sadly. Hair three shades darker!"

"Nonsense! Pure gold wire, spun glass, floss silk, all the nice

things they can possibly call hair. But about Dobrée, you wanted to know. . . . Well, I proposed to her one day in July, during that week when you were too busy packing up and so on to see me."

"I know," she murmured sombrely. "I took my eye off you for one minute and——"

"Oh, I know you disapprove. But—I don't know how it was, I seemed to get myself fixed up for life in a sort of unamorous fury, the business-devil driving me, don't you know? He does ride me sometimes—he's an inherited devil, he made all this . . . !"

He waved his hand to indicate the Castle mound of Angernoune and the park-like drives that spoiled it.

"I knew I was down in his book to commit this error, or act of wisdom—what you will, and I thought to myself, 'Oh, come, damn, let's get it over!' Lots of fellows, it's my firm belief, scuffle into it like that! They get hypnotised by the notion of the general suitability of an engagement—it grows to seem a thing that's got to be, like confirmation——"

"Or death?"

"If you like. . . . Well, I went to call at the flat, and I said something leading, I suppose. They had got me into that sort of mood——"

"They?"

"Lady Maude and Dobrée. It was in that horrid upholsterer's Louis Quinze room of hers, all flowers and frames and cushions and hot cakes—you seem to be swimming in an atmosphere of spooniness the moment the ribbony maid closes the door on you—and Dobrée was less arrogant than usual. It might even be called yielding. Then Lady Maude, who was more or less about, took good care to clinch it—told the sun to stand still upon Gibeon, don't you know, until I'd made her mine—and left the room. Not before she'd, as it were, knocked our two heads together in an engagement kiss. So I had to stand to it, and pretend I was thoroughly in the picture, which I wasn't. I was in *your* picture."

"Then I think you did very wrong. And now—she cries herself sick about your backwardness—so her maid says."

"What can I do? It's only three weeks ago. I've given her a ring, two kisses and a dozen riding lessons. If she can't stand me, she can chuck me. Ha ha! Perhaps that's what I'm driving at all the time?"

"Good Heavens! I hope unconsciously?"

"I expect so. I don't formulate any plan. And yet—there

does seem a kind of barbaric honour in making her find me inadequate, isn't there ? Not a good bargain ? It would be the sort of thing she would throw me over for—if anything—something personal, something that hurts her poor little pride. She's proud, though she loves money. Whereas, if I lost the case and all my tin, I believe I should positively have to bash her to make her give me up. You can't tell, but that's my idea of her. And I ought to know her pretty well ? "

" You don't know her a bit—any more than I do. I confess I don't think there's much to know. But one thing I'm certain of and that is, that though you're every sort of dear yourself, your attitude is that of a cad."

" Hold on ! . . . No, dear Betsey, you may shake your pretty head till your pretty hair comes down—as it has !—but you'll not convince me that I'm a cad. I'm not ! I'm not ! Human beings when it comes to the real big things, can't order their lives on conventions. Those are all right for merely social difficulties. A man's a man for all that——"

" The bounder's gospel ! " said she bitterly. ' Fais ce que *peut*—not *dois*.' A gentleman, wrecked and clinging to a plank, would take his hands off and drown if he incommoded a lady. You're a darling, and you can't help it if you're an opportunist."

" Who has taught you to use such big words ? Lee-Brice ? " said he, dissatisfied.

XXVII

Some of Lady Dobrée's house-party next day, an ever-varying moiety, for people came and went freely, were sitting in one of the wide embrasures that bowed out from the battlemented curtain-wall of Angernoune looking out to sea. It was two days after Veere's arrival. Lady Maude and Dobrée had been talking him over ; when he joined them with the novelist, they talked over some one else.

" That's a nice-looking pair of women you've got to keep the Keep, Ernest," remarked Lady Maude. " The dark one's like an overworked Burne-Jones, and the other like a Romney gone to seed."

" Yes," said the author, innocently, leaving the looks of Mrs. Cox out of count. " It's not a beauty that will last. But she's a splendid vision now. Her colouring is so vivid, the lines of her face so defined as to be almost hard in effect. There's so little shading, so little gradation, the cavities of the eye-sockets are so clean-cut and sharp. Those dark arched eyebrows, over

bold blue eyes, that fine bow-shaped mouth and Greek nose remind me of the best Lady Hamiltons! And her hair with its two shades——"

"Shows she doesn't dye it!" said Lady Maude, generous, but bored to death.

"I was looking at it as she sat on the sands with me a few days ago." Lady Maude raised her eyebrows! "It was so like the shading of the basalt—gold and tawny, with deep strong shadows——"

"You appear to admire her?"

"Yes—as much as I admire anything so full blown," said he, with a glance at Lady Dobrée's pure null profile with its Roman nose and touching angularities of cheek. "She had a child with her?" he added in a vaguely explanatory manner.

"It's not hers, it's Mrs. Cox's, the dark one's," said Dobrée. "It's not a bad-looking child either—reminds me of some one I know, somehow? But I suppose it's like its papa, Mr. Cox?" She laughed. "Next time you're down in the village do buy him a fourpenny ball and I'll pay you."

"Is the Romney married too?" Lady Maude asked Veere.

"I haven't inquired," said Veere plausibly. "Mrs. Cox just asked me if she might have her sister-in-law down here for a change of air and I said yes. Perhaps—she may be married, of course—wife of a poor clerk, I should think!"

"If once you come to think, I wonder you don't get to know!" said Dobrée severely, and Veere realised that he was protesting too much.

"I must go and start the Blessingtons at croquet," he said hastily. "Boris has chewed all the balls and made them uncertain in disposition, and there are about six blades of grass each for them to roll on." He departed.

"Wordy!" said Lady Maude. "He admires the Lady of the Keep. I have a *flair* in these matters. That's all rubbish about her being Mrs. Cox's sister-in-law. You look out, Mr. Lee-Brice, and take fewer walks with basaltic-haired chatelaines, or you'll find yourself trespassing on some one else's preserves."

Dobrée looked puzzled, a little annoyed at her chaperon's crudity. She stood, poised on one foot, anxious to leave them, anxious to hear more. . . .

"I suppose," she said, humbly, "there is a something about women like that——?"

"Something—a *je ne sais quoi*, that makes for un-righteousness!" said Lee-Brice. But there were tears in the girl's eyes.

"Something that makes for men, I suppose you mean?" said

Lady Maude brusquely, for she saw the tears. "Oh, he'll *ranger* himself! That kind of man does. He'll have every *bourgeois* virtue—soon. Dobrée, why don't you go and take a hand at croquet? They seem to want a fourth badly, and I desire to talk freely!"

The girl got up and obeyed. Lady Maude turned to the author recklessly.

"My dear soul, you shouldn't worry that poor girl about her man! Don't you see, poor little wire-haired terrier that she is, that she's now come bang against life, and doesn't know what to make of it? She's got all a woman's tribulations, and no 'savvy' at all. And she's wretched over her engagement in consequence."

"It's an impossible engagement. And she is, as you say, a sweet, straight, undeveloped piece of mechanism, with only one slide to her little lantern. I thought that blue tear I saw in her eye as she ran off adorable. She wept it because the strands of her hair are all one colour, like the strands of her soul. There's no more twist in the woof and warp of that child's heart than will suffice to keep it together. Now the other, the lady of the Keep——"

"Mrs. Adamson?"

"—Has lived."

"With Veere? I hope not. By the way, talking of Veere, did you see in the paper this morning that that murderer—you know, what was his name?—who murdered old Sir Joris, has at last succeeded in committing suicide? They found him in his cell with his throat cut with a rusty nail he got hold of, and he's not expected to live, this time. Don't you remember at the time of the trial how Veere *afficher'd* himself with the wife? Every one was talking about it and trying to get a sight of her, but all they could find out was that she had yellow hair. That they saw through the thick veil she sported. And Veere was always flashing by all his friends in a motor, breaking the speed limit so that we shouldn't see who it was he had with him. It's all over now, of course, but we were so afraid once he was going to marry her as soon as her husband was hanged. I suppose when he got penal servitude for life she subsided into the suburbs again."

"Which was her particular suburb, do you remember?"

"I can't remember. Stop, was it Wimbledon? But, of course, it won't make any difference now. Dobrée has really got him, if she cares to stick to it. Do you know, I think I've stood the wind long enough. My London wig resents it. Let us go down."

As they passed the door of the Keep, she paused :

" Come here, Mr. Lee-Brice. Is it the effect of the wind howling round these old corners, or is it a woman crying ? I distinctly hear it, don't you ? Great cruel sobs ? "

" His Romney Aunt has whipped the Burne-Jones child probably. She looks a bit of a tartar. Come along, dear lady, it's not a case for sympathy. Morning noises are always squalid, not tragic."

XXVIII

" Oh, Betsey, Betsey, you're a widow now ! "

The mistress wept bitterly as she looked over the wife's shoulder and read the official missive that coldly set forth the fact that Wilfrid Altamont or Adamson had at last succeeded in taking his own life in prison. That came at night. Inspector Whortleberry's telegram had arrived that morning—a warning of what might be expected in the course of the day, and the matutinal wails that Lady Maude had heard told of Ada's dire forebodings. When the final news came Wilfrid had been dead in her mind for some hours. She had wept till she could no longer weep, her tears for the moment dried up at the source, it seemed as if the half of her mind was paralysed. She was simply concerned to know Betsey's views on many points concerning her late husband, and with childish insistence tried to inform herself.

" Say you respect him now, Betsey ! You once said you would think more of him if he took his own life ! "

" Did I, dear ? It sounds so awful. But I suppose that is what I meant. I do think less hardly of him."

" Bless you ! " said the poor woman. " And, Betsey, will you wear mourning ? "

" I daren't," said Betsey. " It might give it away. But let me see, you might slide a little black in somehow ? . . . Your Sunday dress is black, isn't it ? Mine is serge—very dark. The only thing is, and I am afraid it will upset you, you mustn't for your life put the child into black. That would be very marked."

" Mustn't I really ? His own father ! "

" We are pensioners of Mr. Veere, Ada, and we must be guided by his wishes. He doesn't want any one to know who we are—so there it is. I'm sorry."

" I think I'll make a cup of tea," said Ada, swallowing her disappointment and flying to her one panacea. " And what

are you going to do after this, Betsey? Is it any good my arsking? You and Billy are all I've left to care for."

"I don't mind your asking, if I only knew myself?"

"Are you going to America?"

"No, I'm off that."

"Don't mean to marry?"

"No."

"Yes, don't you marry again. Stay a widow. We'll be widows together—once marrying is enough. I talk as if I'd been married, don't I—and so I do feel as if I'd been married to the man that's dead. Oh, dear Betsey, you've been so kind, do you mind my saying that? It's cheek, I know."

"Nonsense, dear! Have I ever minded? You're a good sort and as soon as I found that out, I've been quite willing to take cheek or anything else from you. I think we've both behaved very well over it. Oh, my head!"

Ada brewed the tea and brought her a cup. Betsey put her hand up and clasped the kind one that was ministering to her.

"Ada, I'm miserable!" she said.

"Poor soul! It isn't about Wilfrid, either, is it?"

"No, not about Wilfrid."

"You can't take me in, can you?"

"Nor don't want to," said the other spiritlessly. "You'll not do me any harm."

"Harm you, Betsey? Why, I'd go to my death for you, that's what I would do. If my death would give you your heart's desire—and I know well enough what that is—you should have it and welcome. What's that silly girl to him? You and him been to each other—what Wilfrid and I been to each other, pretty near, or thereabouts, and why's she with her blasted title to come in and part them as has known each other like you two have? I say it's a shame!" She went away, muttering, the other woman's head remained obstinately buried in her hand.

Betsey, in the depths of her despair and renunciation, realised that Ada had formed the obvious and inevitable opinion as to her relations with the young man with whom she had been constantly intimate since the day of the funeral of Miss Altamont—with whom she had travelled abroad. . . . What else could Ada think, what else could anybody think who knew of it? She did not care to disabuse her. It was even a point of consolation that Ada, with her sad, slum-wisdom and hard and fast social code, should think no other form of alliance had been possible.

Later on in the afternoon, she said:

"There's to be a high tide on the Black Rock this afternoon.

They say the waves will be highest about five. I'll go down and see. It might cure my headache."

"Wind's bound to make your headache worse."

"Not this sort of headache. . . . No, I won't take Billy, he'd be a responsibility, and in this gale, it's not so easy for a grown-up person even, to keep his footing on those rocks."

She tied a veil over her cap and hair, and like a drift of grey smoke blown this way and that, made her way by the wind-swept links to the place where the seas were reputed to encounter most opposition in their onslaught on the land. The wind was straight off the sea and Norway. It swished and wished through the wooden slats of the railings of the golf-course, it eddied in and out the sand-hills, mowing down and flattening the bents that seemed to lay their spines sideways against its onrush. The little hard pink balls of thrift growing where sand met grass bumped about and knocked each other, and yellow ragwort rattled and shook and looked more ragged and deplorable than ever.

One of the Vicar's nice boys—dear boys like grey whelps in their Jaeger flannel—she liked them—told her that the waves made a splendid show, and that the Castle party were all down there.

She hesitated for one moment, then she decided that she would attract no particular attention in her smoky-coloured wrappings. There were other people there, too, the Vicar and his wife, and some of the visitors. Everybody's eyes would be bleared by salt spray. Yes, she would go on. She needed all the exhilaration that savage Nature can give.

She passed the Castle party, staggering about absurdly on the reef of slippery broken-up rock which flung itself recklessly out to sea, like an inky hand that the white waves licked slavishly, continually. Ever and anon they rose in Kühleborn-like rushes, to be again dissipated in falling water, as Undine's ghostly waggoner, while the foam flecks flew out far down the wind and struck the lookers-on in the face. It was no place for idle seekers after sensation, for the elemental combat recked not of them, but laughed and covered them with flakes of ridicule.

The sea-charges grew more furious. The cold blue sky was stained brown with the dirty spume. It was fully high tide. Betsey had gone to the shelving end of the reef, where the waters spread out lasciviously as they retreated, baffled, and the suction oceanwards was enormous. A woman in despair goes far. The worst was comfort. The sea was kinder than the man she loved . . . sunk as he was in short-sighted ease, concerned in petty issues merely, complacently looking down the avenues of

sophistication that led to his pale desire for a second-rate cheap substitute for life. . . .

Between her and Veere and his chosen friends there were now material barriers, tantamount to Alpine peaks and crevasses which Betsey, agile, had leaped across and poised on easily, like a kid. The town people had none of them seemingly got any balance. Lady Blessington, seized protectingly first by this man and then that, seemed to spin like a saffron-ulstered teetotum. Lady Dobrée, thin and slight in her elegant dark-coloured tweed, waved reed-like, and continually tried to prevent her wind-blown skirts from revealing her too far. Such was not Lady Maude's preoccupation. Veere, in yachting cap and sailor serge, stood by them both, ready to help if either were carried off her feet. A fall into some jagged chasm, set with bone-breaking spikes, would be the result, and even the place the two women had attained unto was none too secure.

Betsey was farther out than any one of the spectators. There was in her case the added danger of being attained and carried out by a heavy back-wash of some eleventh wave. She dauntlessly defied danger. Her attitude was fine.

"What a fool that woman is!" said Veere suddenly to his party, or any one who cared to hear it. "I must tell her. She's a stranger here, I dare say, and doesn't know how dangerous it is!"

Quickly he bridged the gulf that parted him from Betsey, whom he had recognised by the poise of her figure, sharply defined every now and again. It was unlikely that any one else had done so, or heard his excuse for joining her. The senses of seeing and hearing possessed by these landsmen and landswomen were more or less in abeyance owing to the stress of wind and water.

Betsey, of course, did not hear Veere coming or notice him until he was close to her.

"Oh, mistress mine, where are you roaming? . . . Come away from here, it's dangerous."

She turned sharply, and veered towards him.

"Good girl! That was only a blind. You're fairly sure-footed. Give me your hand for a minute—they can't see!"

She laid it in his. It was warm; she had held it in the pocket of her ulster.

"That's all. And now I'll go back to them."

"And may I stay where I am?"

"No, I'd rather you didn't, so near!"

As he departed, leaping gracefully, he made a little funnel of his hands, and bawled, for the benefit of the crowd. "Not safe!"

"He's happier for that hand-squeeze!" thought the woman he had left, scornfully. "He's gone back to them, with fresh strength gathered from me, to pull his iniquitous scheme through. And I, I should not have allowed him. It's as bad and immoral as getting up Unemployed Winter funds—only staves off the crux to another year!"

She could not bring herself to believe that Ernest Veere, loving her with all his heart, could actually and finally espouse the Lady Dobrée De Saye? Something would happen, his better nature would assert itself. So she held on, day by day, a statue of frozen impotent love, a thwarted lonely goddess, disdaining to move hand or foot to meddle with the fate of her strayed votary. Egeria's vaunted intelligence was in abeyance, her wisdom set on one side, but she could still heal. For she knew men, she knew Veere, she had never made a miscalculation but once. In that vital moment with Veere at the stair-head in Worksop House, she had gauged ill the world-forces given her, in ever so little, to control.

She had simply done wrong, been wicked and immoral, most people would say.

That was not the code of Miss Altamont, whose pupil she was. But whatever her crime, or her folly, she complied with its result, or punishment. She would not attempt to touch the pendulum of her own fate and his again.

Her part was again waiting! Apt corrective for a nature like Betsey's, to whom moral inaction always proved one of the worst circles of Hell. Waiting in Wimbledon—waiting in Angernoune, but always waiting!

She stood there on the gradually forsaken reef for some time. She saw, through the tail of her eye, the Castle party furl their wings and go home to tea. For them the play had been played. The eleventh wave had flung itself in all its force and majesty of endeavour at the land's eternal bulwark in vain; now the unhandsome rear guard, the stunted warriors of feebler masses of water did not interest; the heart of the show was over. Yet Betsey stood there glued to the rock, pensive, paralysed. . . .

One mighty remainder, as it were, surged up, and then laid itself out, a vast plateau of foamy water, gasping, panting on the flat of the shelving rock, as on a bed of pain. Betsey watched it go, as the sea sucked it back into its reserves, with a distinct feeling of regret that she was not borne away with it to the forgettable.

(*To be continued*)

THE MONTH

EDITORIAL: *THE CRITICAL ATTITUDE—On the Objection to the Critical Attitude; A Declaration of Faith, by* DIDYMUS; *The Elections and the Democratic Idea, by* ARNOLD BENNETT; *Balance-Sheet of a Twenty-Acre Holding, by* F. E. GREEN;
Publications Received

THE CRITICAL ATTITUDE

On the Objection to the Critical Attitude

It has been objected in several respectable quarters that these pages rang the changes too continuously upon a certain set of names and the objection for what it is worth is a very respectable one. But the end of the ass is to draw carts, the end of the respectable journal is to limit thought within the bounds of respectability, the end of the hyena is to disinter from graveyards the great bones which with its powerful jaws it crushes, extracting no doubt succulent marrow. So The English Review has its several purposes, chief among these being the furthering of a certain school of Literature and of a certain tone of Thought. There is a considerable writer—once he wrote the best short stories that are to be found in English Literature, now, alas! *il pontifie*—there is a certain writer who once said that he welcomed the coming of the motor-car because it would make the Englishman think. We confess to having always been unable to get at the inner significance of this phrase. One motor-car might take an Englishman to Brighton, but could ten thousand make him think? Assuredly not, for nothing could make him think; nothing could make him review his thoughts. The ass draws his cart: the respectable journal preaches respectability: the hyena disinters and crunches his bones, but the Englishman—he is just God's Englishman.

So that an English Review is a contradiction in terms: it is also a splendid, forlorn hope. It has set out to perform what that eminent writer said would be the function of the motor-car. But no sane man would set out to make the ass play upon a musical instrument, the respectable journal to take broad views, or the hyena to distil eau-de-cologne. For these things upon the face of them would be insane enterprises. So with The English Review, which set out to enjoin upon the Englishman a Critical Attitude.

But nothing will make the Englishman adopt a critical

attitude. He is a sentient being, he can feel; he is a poietic being, he can act; he is a poetic one, has he not given us the finest verse of the modern world? Sartorially he is without an equal on earth. He is, in fact, constructive. Luther and Darwin between them have destroyed revealed religion except for the few belated souls who linger in the folds of the churches of Rome, of Greece, of Mohammed, of Buddha and the rest. But for his own particular islands where Luther and Darwin, like consecutive steam-rollers, extinguished by force of criticism all possibility of simple faith, the Englishman has founded three hundred and forty-seven religions. And each of these religions is founded upon a compromise. That is what the Englishman does to, that is how he floors—the Critical Attitude.

In these islands critics have been extraordinarily rare. When they have arisen they have been listened to with dislike and dread, or with a show of respect. Then they have been patted out of the way. If a slug should enter a bee-hive these industrious insects will, if they can accomplish it, slay him with their stings, but failing this, and in any case, they set to work and cover him with wax. They pack the wax down, they smooth it over: they extinguish, in fact, that poor slug until he reposes beneath a fair monument, a respectable protuberance from which escape neither groans nor foul odours. Now our islands are the bee-hives, and what is the critic in England, when direfully he appears, but just a slug? He lives if he has a chance, suspected, dreaded, applauded. Then he disappears. He is covered with the wax of oblivion. So it has been with, let us say, Hobbes, Matthew Arnold, and Mr. Ruskin, who, being dead, are nearly as much forgotten as, let us say, the inventor of the safety bicycle.

The English consumer of the Arts limits himself in his criticism to saying that such and such a book is a good book, such and such a picture is a good picture, or such and such a piece of music is a good piece of music. This means to say either that he likes the book or that he thinks that he ought to say that he likes the book, the picture or the piece of music. Or, on the other hand, he will substitute for the epithet "good" that of "bad." This means that he dislikes the work in question or considers that he ought to say that he dislikes it. And this is not the critical attitude.

On the other hand it is not a criminal attitude. Theoreti-

cally considered a good work of Art would be one that every proper man would like. Thus *The Victory of Samothrace* will by some be considered the supreme work of Art. By others it will be loved in a lesser degree. But it is inconceivable to imagine any human being—or at any rate any Occidental—who would dislike it. But if, on the other hand, we take the Holy Scriptures, we find a work that, by a considerable portion of Christendom, is considered the book of books. It is beloved, it is pored over, it is learned by heart, it inspires heroisms, devotions or cruelties. This is the case with Protestants and the children of Protestants who take in its teachings from their births and by its standards measure good and evil. But Roman Catholics and Free Thinkers approach the Bible with an attitude much more critical and find in it barbarisms, crudenesses, disproportions and revelations of sickening cruelties. We ourselves, going by accident—and in consequence with livelier perceptions—into an Anglican place of worship, have been horrified and revolted by the extracts from the Bible which were read to a congregation of apparently amiable and humane persons. The extract from the New Testament dealt with eternal fire, that from the Old recounted how a Jewish king had a place of worship surrounded by his soldiers and all the worshippers butchered. Afterwards he sat in a gateway and had the heads of the worshippers cast down before him, each head wrapped up in a palm-leaf for convenience of carriage. And this history was so exceedingly well done in a literary sense that although we are personally too little acquainted with the Scriptures to rediscover this passage and although the occasion was many years ago, it remains vividly fixed in our memory.

Here at once the question of criticism steps in. That the Bible renders its scenes with extraordinary literary skill, practically no one would care to deny. But whereas on the one hand the good Protestant will call it the book of books and will, for the matter of that, say that all good English finds its inspiration from the English translation of the Scriptures, it is perfectly open to the good Catholic to consider that the Bible is a disagreeably realistic book. The militant atheist—if any militant atheists still remain—will consider it a horrible work enshrining the most deleterious, the most immoral doctrines. The purely indifferent man alone could consider the Bible with a perfectly open mind and with a perfectly open mind criticise alike its subject-matter and its literary value.

No one, on the other hand, could criticise the moral subject of "The Winged Victory." It has receded, we have advanced into regions of an entire aloofness, so that all we have to consider and all it offers us to consider are the sweep of the great wings, the wind in the folds of the dress, the forward poise of the incomparable body. It is to a position of some such aloofness that, in writing the Critical Attitude, we have attempted to attain. So to achieve, from such a distance to view the things that are around us is perhaps the most difficult task in life. On the one hand we have our friendships, on the other our quarrels, on the one side are our preferences and hopes, on the other our vision of things as they are. For nothing is more difficult, nothing is more terrible than to look things in the face. We have to be ready to recognise and if we are strong enough to acclaim, that things seeming to us hideous may embody a New Beauty. We have to watch modern life sweeping away the traditions that we love, the places that we deem hallowed: we have to consider that it is blowing away us ourselves as if we were no more than a little dust. And yet, if we have consciences, we must seek to perceive order in this disorder, beauty in what shocks us and premonitions of immortality in that which sweeps us into forgotten graves.

And this is the hardest task of all. For rightly considered criticism which has in it the essentials of valid criticism is not only a disintegrator, is not only destructive, does not even only restrain. If it cannot be constructive it should at least exhort: if on the one hand it must say, "Examine into the composition and the past history of your pill before you swallow it"; on the other hand, once the composition and this history are ascertained to be satisfactory, it must enjoin with no doubting voice the deglutition. Therefore the Critical Attitude is so much disliked, is so much distrusted by humanity.

For we have all of us our little panaceas, our little beliefs, our little dogmas and for each of these panaceas, beliefs and dogmas we desire a certain tenderness of handling. They are the integral portion of our being, they are ourselves more than are the members of our body, they are the things for which we would go to the death more willingly than for the roof which shelters our heads. Anon comes the critic. He professes to be ready to weigh in the balance not only the panaceas of ourselves and of our friends but also the pre-

tensions of those who are our opponents. He pretends to do justice between cause and cause as equally as the backbone of the herring lies amidmost of the fish. And this appears to us men a pestilential proposition—for we desire that those ideas which are a part of ourselves, which are our very selves—that those ideas should be treated with some of the tenderness which is due to divine things. For are we not, being the children of God, divine ? Thus the approach of the critic is chilling. It is not so much that we object to justice being done to our opponent : it is that for our very existence we must in our weak places have the benefit of the doubt. It is not enough that the critic should say that we are nine parts gold to one part dross, for that one part will be to us dearest of all. It is not enough that the critics will say to us as writer that we have not in the world, in all space or in all time our equal for what is called " getting an atmosphere " since we desire to be praised for our rendering of the emotion of railway travelling or of the passion of love. And indeed, it is not only for this that we hate the critic. He may censure our actions and leave us unmoved : he may condemn what we have produced and only spur us to the effort to produce better. But what we dread is that he may demonstrate to ourselves the hollowness of our beliefs. Our adversary may outvote us ; he may burn us at the stake, yet he will not touch the dogmas that give warmth to our heart and directness to our glance. But the critic praising us upon the one hand may, on the other, put into our hearts the doubt not only of ourselves but of our leaders ; he may take all the comfort out of life. The good Christian, that is to say, dislikes comparatively little the pagan who says that he should be burnt for his beliefs. But if a critical, dispassionate, a cold-blooded student should demonstrate—supposing it to be demonstrable — that the Redeemer was fallible, this critic would be immensely more disliked. He would be shuddered at ; his name would be anathema. M. Anatole France, that is to say, who explains away the miracles of Blessèd Joan whilst admiring her heroism, her self-sacrifice and her military genius—M. Anatole France is much more disliked by the supporters of the maid than are the persons who burned her. He is disliked more deeply and more fundamentally since he has caused a greater trouble of the heart. Or again, an iron-founder might, with the vapours from his chimney, shut out the light of the sun for a great number of us and we should not do much more than grumble. But should the same man attempt to demonstrate that the sun was not the centre

of the solar system we should at once be filled by an enormous and a contagious dread, for he would be attacking one of our settled ideas. And the tendency of humanity is to give to all its settled ideas an equal value, and most men upon hearing the theory of the solar system attacked would exclaim : " What next ? "

For they would foresee that by encouraging this one iconoclast they would be opening the door to men who would desire to test and to shake all other accepted ideas. If the sun were dethronable so also, they would feel, would be the British Constitution, British family life, the laws of marriage and the very laws of property themselves.

And this is true in every sphere of criticism. It is generally accepted that Milton was a great poet and that Dr. Johnson was no writer but a gross talker whose remarks were taken down by Mr. Boswell. Now supposing that a critic should arise to say that Johnson is a great writer or *Paradise Lost* a dull and pompous work and that the figure of Milton by obscuring the less-known seventeenth-century poets has shut our eyes to a whole world of lyrical beauty for which all the epics and all the prose writing of Milton can never make amends, all men with their accepted ideas on a literary hierarchy will exclaim against the impertinence or the very atheism of the critic. And this indignation, this moral fervour, will be felt by men whose affection for the works of Milton is of the most mediocre. For here again mankind will say : " Where will this end ? "

The fact is that a man of action feels that he cannot with assurance pursue the course marked out for him by his will, if his intellect be troubled by doubts. Upon the face of it one would say that mankind, seeking as it does for novelties, would welcome new ideas, would find in them something fresh, something delightful, something interesting. But this is not the case. The fact is that new ideas almost invariably affect our sense of values—our sense of the whole values of everything. If you tamper with the ideal of the Marriage Laws you will interfere not only with the sanctity of the home but also with the sense of property, with values in Literature and with all ideas of human relationship. To interfere with these ideas is very seriously to diminish the motive force that impels men to any protracted and consistent course of action. For most men commit themselves to action not for the sake of the action itself

but in order to attain to some end altogether extraneous. A man will toil honestly, industriously, soberly, in work that has no particular interest for him—and this fortunately or unfortunately is the lot of the great majority of Englishmen—he will undertake painful labours, he will perfect arduous undertakings not for the love of those pains and labours but in order to attain to the exclusive society of some woman, to decorate her with stuffs and furs, memorial of his prowess, to establish his children work-free in a working world, to acquire acres upon which he may set his feet, saying: "This from the peak of Heaven to the centre of the world is my own."

If then the critic shall say that the perfect union between man and woman is a thing so rare that the greatest good of the greatest number demands the abolition of the institution of marriage, this man of action will feel subconsciously, though he will not put it into words, that he is weakened, that strength has gone out from him. He will not listen to the critic; if it be practicable he will stone him to death. For by depriving him of that single-minded necessity for exertion the critic will have deprived him of so much vital force.

Thus in lands whose inhabitants are principally men of action the critical attitude is almost more disliked and almost more distrusted by the looker-on than by the subject of the criticism, since the desire of men of action is to get something done. This desire accounts for the English doctrine of muddling through in matters of State. It accounts also in matters of Art for the fact that very rarely has the English artist in whatever branch he practises any considerable technical excellence. He trusts so much more to temperament, and just as the British Statesman very seldom studies such things as history or the psychology of crowds, so practically never—except in very limited circles or during limited periods—does the English artist make any technical studies beyond what are absolutely necessary for the elementary practice of his Art.

And, indeed, the English nation demands of its statesmen as of its artists this quality of amateurishness. For its Cabinet Ministers it demands qualities not of the head but of the heart, and it asks the same of its preachers as of its painters, from its statesmen as from its authors. For in England a cool, clear-

headed and remorseless lawgiver would be regarded with as much misgiving and dislike as would be a novelist of the type of Guy de Maupassant. Yet essentially the function of a law is to eliminate, scientifically, certain elements of the body politic that other elements may be encouraged, and essentially the function of the novel is to render life even though its ultimate aim should be to make life a better thing.

England, however, has hardly ever produced a remorseless novelist. Smollet is perhaps the one example that she can show, and for one lover of Smollet in the land, Sterne, who wilfully and even cynically sentimentalised over human vicissitudes, can show ten thousand. England has practically never produced a remorseless statesman. Thomas Cromwell is almost the only example that she can show. Yet for one person who does not revile the name of the Flail of the Monks—and none can be found to love him!—there are hundreds of thousands who praise the ghost of Cromwell's kinsman, Oliver. Yet the Lord Protector, a mighty military organiser, was as a Statesman a pale and ineffectual employer of the tremendous force that his great-uncle had put ready to his hand. For not only did Thomas Cromwell render a return to Catholicism economically and temperamentally impossible in these islands, but he gave into the hands of a ruler of real force, Parliament, an instrument that Oliver so signally failed to wield. Oliver, however, was a sentimental, a picturesque figure: Thomas, a cold scientist acting according to the maxims of Machiavelli, the writer on government who was the most critical in his attitude that the day had yet seen arise.

Thomas Cromwell, indeed, gave us Modern England. He gave the country not only the blessings it enjoys but also its chief problem. He destroyed Catholicism and the rule of the noble: he gave us Protestantism and a democratic instrument that is as nearly perfect as any that has yet been known, since, from the days of Cromwell's modification of Parliament, it has very effectually registered the will of the People at such times as the People were in the frame of mind to have desires or to pay attention to public matters. On the other hand, when the People have been lethargic, Parliament has never failed to bow to the will of strong individual rulers such as the Tudors or Sir Robert Walpole. Yet Cromwell had no passions and no humanitarianism. To the modern ideal that that State is great

where individuals are happy he would have answered that before individuals can be happy the State must be strong and so constituted as to suit the needs of strong individuals. Because this latter part of his doctrine was not carried out, because humanitarianism came creeping in, our modern State is defective, we have compromised as we are perpetually compromising. And the result is a perpetual discord—a discord that we have never muddled through into any harmonious resolution. It was the Redeemer Who first said that the poor are always with us, Who first glorified the poor, Who first adumbrated the vision of a State adapted to the needs of the weak and of the humble. But Cromwell was more than anything an opponent of Christ or was more than anything indifferent to Christianism. In a rough and ready way the Church, before the sweeping away of the monasteries, attempted to mould States into the forms of Christian Commonwealths. The Church took the poor under its protection. It attempted to wrest from temporal powers as great a portion of their resources as it could. It administered more or less wastefully these resources, using them primarily in the interests of the Cult and secondarily in those of the poor, who are God's brothers. Thus after a fashion they left for Cæsar as little as they could of the thing that was Cæsar's and rendered all the rest to God. Mediævalists, some Humanitarians, Idealists and others, seeing the immense body of poor men that the great monasteries supported, see also in this arrangement the ideal charity, the ideal method of disposing of those poor who are always with us. And indeed, the ideal is a fine one. But it should not be forgotten that Cromwell also had his panacea for the poor—a panacea perfectly simple, perfectly direct, perfectly logical. This was the rope. Cromwell desired to render unto Cæsar—unto a State infinitely strong—all the things in the world. God might have the rest, nor for the poor either was there any place in his republic. Under his auspices the rope was used unsparingly: in thousands and thousands as rats come out of a demolished haystack the poor came out of monastery after monastery that Cromwell demolished, and in thousands and thousands under the auspices of the Flail of the Monks the poor were hanged. This was the logical consequence, this was the inevitable result of a strong, of a Christless State. And it is only because our rulers since then have wavered between statecraft and mercy that we have with us still the great problem of the modern State.

WEALTH varies in relation to the population and Humanitarianism in relation to wealth. Thus it is significant that Humanitarianism, as exemplified in Socialistic ideals, had its birth during the period, one of the very few periods in the world's history when means of production had overtaken the birth-rate. For whereas Socialism in England during the Victorian period was under the auspices of men like William Morris, of a purely idealistic nature, Socialism to-day is of a nature scientifically economic, tempered, as must always be the case in England, with humanitarian sentimentalism. True Toryism and true Socialism have been pointed out to amount in the end to the same thing. Both aim at the establishment of a strong State made up of efficient individuals. But whereas the new Socialism is still tempered by such watchwords as Fraternity and Equality, the old Toryism was in any humanitarian sense utterly remorseless in its dealing with the weak. And it is probable that the death of the old Toryism and the dislike that is felt for the newer forms of Socialism are alike due to what is logical in their ideals. And it is equally probable that as the Socialistic ideal develops so it must become more and more logically remorseless in its dealings with humanity. At present its aims are limited to knocking off the idle rich but, these once disposed of, it will perforce turn its attention to the non-productive poor. Idleness is a disease, misfortune is a disease, poverty is a disease, and the healthy State cannot afford to contain diseased members. That advanced thought will eventually have to deal with such diseased members upon lines similar to that of Cromwell with his rope, we need not very much doubt. If Socialism gets the upper hand its tendency will be towards the equal distribution of wealth. But with population and the taste for luxuries—the necessity for luxuries—increasing day by day however equally wealth may be distributed, eventually there will come a time when the production of the world will be insufficient to meet the necessities of its peoples. As soon as that juncture arrives—and it may be said that that juncture has already arrived—the necessity for dealing stringently with the non-productive will become imperative. It is incredible that any statesman to-day should venture to say that the unhealthy shall by law be prohibited from breeding. It would probably be impossible even to introduce any such Bill into the House of Commons. Yet some such law rigidly enforced would go very far towards solving the social problem. At present not only does the State suffer degenerate persons to multiply but by every means of its power it keeps alive the degenerate products of such unions

and in innumerable ways supports colonies of unnumbered creatures maimed by mental and physical diseases.

For all of these in the modern State the only logical remedies would be starvation, the axe or the lethal chamber. Civilisation has no time to deal with the criminal or the diseased in any form, As to whether the criminal exists there may be two opinions, so that there may be two opinions as to how he should be dealt with. But that, logically speaking, the consumptive or the sufferer from any permanent infectious disease or the man or woman who is temperamentally unlucky or who, let us say, through drink habitually commits mean actions—that these degenerates should be either executed or relegated to pest colonies as in mediæval times the lepers were—that this is the logical corollary of the modern commercial State no thinking person could very well deny. But imagine the dislike that would be felt even by the normal, the prosperous and the perfectly healthy for the constructive critic who first seriously enunciated this doctrine, or for the statesman who attempted to enforce a Poor Law based upon it.

For the fact is that logic is inhuman and that criticism, though it need not be actively inhuman, must, as far as possible, put aside sympathy with human weaknesses. All men, all books, all projects and all methods of Art must have the defects of their qualities. And it is the duty of the critic to point out these defects as well as these qualities. If it be granted, to resume our illustration, that a Poor Law system based on kindness will be a drag upon a State whose necessity is economic strength, it would become the duty of the critic of that State to put forward some such theories as those we have uttered in the last few pages. It would become his duty to put these theories so strongly, so remorselessly and so convincingly that he would secure a certain modicum of attention. Now supposing that the ordinary kind-hearted man should become half-convinced that the good of the State demands the annihilation of the unemployed, that, in fact, he cannot have at one and the same time a sound State and more mouths to fill than food to fill them with, this ordinary, kindly man will feel pain! Deep in his heart, deep in the hearts of all men lies the belief that we can eat our cakes and have them, that we can make omelettes without breaking eggs, that in some way mysteriously, whilst

august and inscrutable Destiny for a moment averts its glance, effect will dodge cause. We desire that our preachers shall give us comfort in the night by preaching through the day these comfortable doctrines: we desire that our statesmen shall find means to enrich the poor without impoverishing the rich: we desire that new standards shall be set up without damage to old traditions—or we desire, as a last resort, that these things, if they have to be done, should in no way be brought to our attention. We should like, that is to say, to see an Act passed that would exclude all aliens from these shores and to be able at the same time still to proclaim that England is the home of liberty, the succouring-ground of all that have fallen in lost causes, the asylum of all oppressed peoples. Thus we pass an Act which ensures that no alien shall land unless he have in his pocket a certain sum of money or travel with a first-class ticket. In that way we imagine that we may distinguish the sheep from the goats and that Kosciuszko with fifteen pounds in his pocket or Garibaldi travelling saloon may be sifted from M. Cartouche who has stolen forty thousand pounds' worth of jewellery and from M. Alphonse whose traffic in human flesh gives him a princely revenue.

The critic is the person who points out that such results will not spring from such enactments and that is why the Critical Attitude is so detested.

E. R.

A Declaration of Faith

By Didymus

I HAVE been asked—as being merely a man of the street—to express my views upon the political situation. I may say that I am a very ordinary man with the very ordinary man's tastes, the very ordinary man's occupations and the very ordinary income of a professional man slightly above the shopkeeping class. I have to work fairly hard to make this income, but my hours of work leave me a sufficiency of leisure in which to speculate upon questions of the day.

Last week, after a dinner at which we had very naturally been discussing politics—and there was no getting away from politics to any subject whatever—I discussed politics with a very charming lady at the very moment when the guests were dispersing. And just as she turned to go, I said that the state of affairs was so perplexing that I did not intend to exercise my prerogative of voting at all. She exclaimed over her shoulder as she shook hands with the hostess: "Traitor!" She disappeared.

Now I ask myself: "Am I a traitor, and if so, a traitor to what?" For the last twelve years I have possessed from three to four votes. I have never voted once. I have never, that is to say, been in a position to feel assured that one party or the other would be the better for the nation. Or it would be still more precise to put it that I have never been able to be certain which party would be the worse. In this I think I am one with all the ordinary men of the nation. I differ from them only in the fact that I maintain this equanimity and this point of view even in the midst of the hideous noise of the General Election. For the nation is made up of a comparatively few Liberals and their allies, of a comparatively few Conservatives and of a vast bulk of ordinary men. These ordinary men are very much like myself except that at times they are moved by brazen clamour from the hustings to vote in masses for one party or the other. What sways them is an effective political cat-call, an effective election poster or a politician of an attractive

personality. For myself, I presume that I have either too little heart or too much imagination to be swayed by any of these things.

In common with the great bulk of my fellow-countrymen I am by temperament an obstinate, sentimental and old-fashioned Tory. I am perfectly contented with the House of Lords as it is—nay, I should like to see it strengthened along its present lines. If some organ or politician could be found to exclaim: "Tariff Reform means fewer Dukes," I should welcome it; I should vote for its candidate. For fewer Dukes would mean dukedoms more effective. In common, I should say, with the greater bulk of my countrymen, I am for Mr. Balfour right or wrong. But I mistrust Mr. Balfour's party even more than I mistrust the mixed majority which supports Mr. Asquith. As you pointed out in your last issue, the Conservative party is entirely in the grip of its impossible and monstrous party press. To all intents and purposes its course is dictated by the outcome of a long struggle between Lord Northcliffe and the Leader of the Opposition. If the return to power of the Conservatives would mean the actual or virtual dictatorship of Mr. Balfour—as the return to power of the Liberals would mean the virtual dictatorship of Mr. Lloyd George—I should vote Conservative to-morrow. Unfortunately, if the Conservatives returned to power, the result would be no more than the long struggle between Mr. Balfour and the great mass of his irresponsible followers—the long struggle which for so many years has stultified Toryism.

For that reason I should prefer to witness the return to power of Mr. Lloyd George. Mr. Lloyd George is perfectly honest, is wonderfully clear-headed, is simple and is direct in his methods. It is perfectly true that he has given us a Budget along Socialistic lines, but that is his business: that is what he is there for. If he can manage it he will pillage the "haves" for the good of the "have-nots." Now, inasmuch as I belong personally and by temperament to the "haves," I object to being pillaged by Mr. Lloyd George for the benefit of anybody. At the same time I recognise that my votes are given me for the purpose, not of 'bolstering up myself or my class but in order that I may consider what is best for the nation and so vote as to help in bringing that best about. Now even as to this I am in two frames of mind. It is open to me to say *noblesse oblige* and to let myself be pillaged from the comparatively sentimental standpoint that the poor man has for so long had a bad time of it that the time has come when it is the duty of

myself and of that class that for so long has had a comparatively good time of it to stand aside and to give the poor man what in the popular language is called "a show." I do not know that I should strongly object to doing this, and I very heartily wish that some breath of some such sentiment had made its appearance in the Conservative party utterances.

But on the other hand I am by no means certain that such legislation would be for the country's good. It is open to me to say that the poor are the inefficient and that any legislation which enables them to slacken in their efforts is detrimental to the national spirit and indeed to the spirit of the whole world. I do not, be it observed, state this as a settled conviction : it is a point to be pondered upon. I am, however, very certain that we are immensely over-populated. And although it may be contended that the ultimate end of life is the multiplying of sensations and to that extent the increase of population tends to carry out the ultimate purpose of things, I am equally certain that it would be better for the nation if its numbers could be reduced by one-third or one-half, if only it could be insured that the remnant were all efficient workers and open-minded individuals. Perhaps legislation could never secure this ; perhaps on the other hand it could. The world seems to me to divide itself into a very few individuals who have a certain originating power whether in the provinces of thought or of action ; into a larger number but still a comparatively few who have not only a power of production but a delight in producing ; and into an immense proportion of entirely unnecessary people whose only function in the world would appear to be to become the stuff to fill graveyards. So that when I pass through great featureless, sordid districts of London I find myself wondering whether if the Deity were really beneficent, He would not send us a slaughter, famine or a pestilence that would sweep away all these purposeless populations and afterwards let loose His rivers and floods to sweep every trace of their habitations from the world. These, of course, are not the sort of arguments that would be effective upon an electioneering poster, but if they were honest the Conservative party would employ them and would be swept out of existence, but they would have my vote, which their canvassers assure me is the chief desire of their hearts to obtain. I should like to see legislation introduced which would press hard upon, which would exterminate, all the purely parasitic classes. I should like to see all men, except the few that are absolutely necessary —I should like to see all men swept away who make a profit

out of other men's labour. The other day I was requested to purchase a piano for a friend in South Africa. I came upon a German firm in the West End of London who are agents for a certain make of instrument which is manufactured in South Germany. The price of this instrument, which was very ingeniously overstrung upon a principle till then unknown to me, was £65. Upon my giving my order for one of these instruments the agent informed me that my commission would be £12. I refused the commission and begged him to strike it off the price of the piano to be charged to my friend. He said that his trade rules prevented him from doing this: either I must have the commission or he must. As the piano that he had in stock was one for the purposes of exhibition and was a little soiled, he asked me to go down into the city where there was another agent who had a large stock of these instruments and there to select a new one. My first agent made a profit, my second made yet another profit, and there was yet a third agent in Hamburg who made another profit, and there was a Piano-Trade Organisation in Berlin which took a commission, and the actual sum paid to the manufacturer of the piano was, I discovered, a little over £12. Now this seems to me to be an appalling state of things, and if I were Chancellor of the Exchequer I would so adjust the burdens of taxation as to do away once and for all with all these parasitic commission-mongers. I would press very heavily upon all speculative operations. I think I should even be inclined to confiscate all profits made by investments after a reasonable interest had been paid. This appears to me to be Socialism of a sort and could not be very rigidly enforced except as a matter of principle. But as a principle it might very well be at the back of the mind of a legislator if legislators there must be. Personally—and in this I am sure that I have the ordinary man with me—I should like to see all legislation suspended for a long period of years. I should like to see both Houses of Parliament shut up and I should like to see the country handed over to that very excellent body of men the public officials. Except in several minutiæ we do not need any new legislation; our present laws work, on the whole, very well, and are equally and justly administered; and the minutiæ might very well be left to the heads of departments to deal with. There would remain the question of Supply, but that could be fixed at the ratio of Mr. Lloyd George's Budget. To Mr. Lloyd George's Budget I have no particular objection except that the licensing clauses appear to me to be vindictive and unreasonable. But for the rest, as a writer in THE ENGLISH REVIEW observed last

month, no reasonably minded man objects to its actual enactments. Where reasonable and not captious objection is made it is not to anything that the Budget actually contains but to the idea that certain of its clauses will lead to the introduction of Socialism if their principle be followed out in future legislation.

With the Budget, then, I am in comparative agreement as an actual measure, and I shall be prepared to deal with the Socialism of the future when the future arrives. But I consider that the action of the House of Lords in referring the Budget to the people was perfectly justifiable and I consider that any tampering with the present Second Chamber would be exceedingly dangerous. Its abolition I should regard as absolutely calamitous. After all we are a people who for good or for ill regard, and apparently always must and will regard, property and possessions as the only standard of value in life. On the other hand, we are a people amongst whom the jury system has flourished long and has been extremely beneficent. And the House of Lords is a jury—a jury which if not elective is yet sufficiently sensitive to any strong and permanent wave of public opinion. Nor do I consider the heredity principle at all a bad one. I have a rather distinguished uncle, the son of a still more distinguished father, to whom the sneering objection was once made that the sons of great men are seldom great. He replied: "Still more seldom the sons of little men." And if the untold millions of the undistinguished are taken into account and the few great it will be seen that, however small the percentage of the distinguished sons of the distinguished may be, the percentage amongst the undistinguished is infinitely smaller. And the sensitiveness of the House of Lords to public opinion, leaving though it does a great deal to chance, is yet more satisfactory in practice than any elected Second Chamber of which I can conceive. The elected senators of to-day must be either strong party men or else specialists. Specialists are the last men to whom I would give any power over general legislation; party men would be almost as undesirable. For a party-elected senate would do no more than register the wills of the elected party who elected them. They would be almost as open to popular outcry and to panic elections as the popular Chamber itself. This, more than anything it seems to me, should be avoided. It is objected that the House of Lords registers always and automatically the will of the Conservative party. But when it comes to be considered what a poor creature the Conservative party has been for very long—when it comes to be considered that for a century past nearly all its important

legislative enactments have been the reintroduction of Liberal or of Liberal-inspired measures, we may see how very well on the whole the House of Lords works. It is always objected—and the objection seems to strike a responsive chord in the great heart of our people—that the House of Lords does not give the Liberal party a sporting chance. But I do not know that I am interested in sporting chances. I am concerned for the welfare of the nation. And if the Liberal party get, as they do, their share of the spoils of office, it seems to me that that is all the chance we need bother ourselves about. The mere mortification of seeing their Bill modified by the Lords may very well be assuaged by the material satisfaction of office, and if they love their country they may well be gratified to see how, when next a Conservative Administration follows them, their own measures are in spirit reintroduced and passed by both assemblies.

It will thus be seen that if I voted for the Liberals on the question of the Budget, I should vote for the Conservatives on that of the Peers.

On the question of Woman Suffrage I am requested by the Editor to abstain from speaking. I will say, therefore, only that on this question, too, I am against the Government. On the other hand, I desire Home Rule for Ireland with as much fervour as I desire to see the vote given to women. I do not profess to understand the Irish Question in its internal aspects, but we have so cruelly botched and muddled the affairs of Ireland and we have done this for so many centuries that I am very certain that if the Irish had the management of their own affairs they could not, by any possible Celtic ingenuity, more bitterly mismanage them. They might drift into disorder, they might have to pass through times of famine, but the disorders would be congenial, the famines more easy to bear than those that we inflict upon them—the disorders and famines would be things more gracious than the dismal commercialism which would be all that we could ever give them, even if we had the power of reducing them to docility and of teaching them our ways. As for the Conservative yelping that Belfast would become a German harbour, all that I can say is that if we are not men enough to prevent that, the sooner the Germans govern us the better it will be. And if the obviation of that danger shall cost us a little money, that money shall be well spent that is laid out in washing away the stain of the bloody curse of Cromwell and of the shameful Act of Union. Moreover, the conferring of Home Rule upon Ireland would be an excellent first step towards that Imperial Federation which is one of our

most earnest necessities. For we must have either an efficient Federation of the Colonies or we must cut the Colonies adrift altogether. I must confess that I care very little which of these alternatives obtains. The Colonies are for us a perpetual source of national weakness and expenditure, but on the other hand the British Empire is a very important factor in the civilisation of the world, and if it costs us something to maintain we owe, after all, a cock to Æsculapius. We come, then, to the question of Tariff Reform. This I must confess myself entirely unable to understand. From my temperamental dislike for Whiggism I ought intensely to desire the introduction of Tariff Reform, but, on the other hand, the methods of argument of the Tariff Reformer fill me with an intense distrust. In spirit it resembles the old national cry of: "Here is a foreigner: heave half a brick at him." And this is not the spirit to enter upon legislation which must immensely affect the nation for a great number of years. I am inclined to think that the effect of Tariff Reform would mean the ruin of persons with fixed moderate incomes, strikes of immensely long duration, the loss of a portion of our shipping trade unless certain ports, as are Hamburg and Bremen, should be left as free shipping centres. It would too, I think, for reasons into which I have not space to enter, mean the transference of the world's banking interests from London to New York. On the other hand, the dumping shops do considerably shake my convictions. That English workmen should be brought into competition with foreign labour, which is miserably organised and which is miserably underpaid, seems to me to be a distinct hardship. And yet when I consider the possibilities of corruption that Protection would introduce into these islands, I am inclined to forego even the chance of bettering the position of the labour market. It is remarkable, however, that the Conservatives should go to the country on an appeal simply and solely to the working man. Yet there it is and the position does nothing to mitigate my distrust. I think, therefore, that upon the whole my vote, if I were forced under penalty to employ it, would go to the Liberals on this question. A certain measure of protection I should like to see introduced—not, that is to say, for the purpose of preventing the entrance of foreign goods, but with a view to preventing the great and sudden fluctuations of prices that are so unsettling to the labour market. Supposing, that is to say, that the price at which any given commodity can be produced leaving a margin of profit sufficient to keep mills or factories in full work—supposing that price to be two shillings. As soon as

the price of that commodity fell below two shillings it follows that the producing works would either run on short time or would discharge a portion of their hands. To prevent this I should advocate the imposing of such a tariff, automatically adjusted, as would cause the price of all foreign importations of that commodity to rise to two shillings. Thus, supposing the foreign introductions could for the time being be put on the market at one shilling and ninepence, I would impose a duty of threepence per unit. There would be objections to this plan, but at least, whilst on the one hand it would preclude an unreasonable rise of prices, it would aim a blow at that most harmful of all things, competition, with a view to conquering a market.

I limit myself to home questions for I feel that I have occupied enough space and must leave room for more practised pens. Let me only say that as far as the Navy is concerned I am in complete agreement with the several articles that have from time to time appeared in THE ENGLISH REVIEW upon this subject. The tone of the more irresponsible public utterances with regard to a friendly foreign Power have been of late so distressing that I am lost in amazement at the change in manners that has overspread my countrymen. Our business is to be prepared and not to shout. And if I distrust the efficiency or goodwill of the present Government in the matter of preparations I so entirely distrust the manners and methods of the Opposition that I am inclined to think that on that ground alone their return to power would be a calamity. That any party should permit one of its organs to publish such a series of articles as those of Mr. Blatchford is no less than a hateful crime: that those articles should be used as arguments on party platforms is tantamount to treason against the nation. Mr. Blatchford is no doubt sincere: his facts may be correct—in certain cases I know them to be so. But the sincerity is to be deprecated, the facts to be stored in the heart of the governing classes, not shouted from platforms. For, if our danger from a foreign Power be so great, if our own State be so weak and unprepared, we are only saving that Power the trouble of sending spies if we proclaim it from the housetops. If, on the other hand, it be untrue that that foreign nation is arming against us and our dependencies, then indeed it is only challenging them to prepare for war if we return to power a party that has so persistently insulted a friendly nation. And the conduct of the South African War by the Conservatives was after all not such as to make us imagine that the opposing party could do very much worse.

Such are the political views of a very ordinary man : such I believe to be the attitude of the ordinary men of the whole nation if you make allowance for differences of class and of personal circumstances. The fortunes of the present election will be determined by effective cat-calls, but they will be no particular guide to the normal psychology of the nation. For what the country needs is a touch of the finer feelings in its statesmen, a little chivalry, a little public spirit. What possibly might save the country, if it needs saving ; what would certainly do the country good—and I am sure it needs good doing to it—would be a coalition Cabinet composed of Mr. Balfour, Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. John Burns, assisted in their deliberations by any common jury from his Majesty's Courts of Justice. Until that comes I shall withhold my votes from the ballot and deem myself no traitor neither. For I cannot see that much good can come to us from either party and I am certain that much harm will from both.

The Elections and the Democratic Idea

By Arnold Bennett

I

The immediate results of the elections are important, but the forces which have been at work to produce these results are at least as important, for continuing to act they will produce further results; and they are apt to be a little overlooked. Therefore let me bring them forward into the light, not in order to disengage from them abstract principles, but with the mere intention of really seeing them.

To find a simple and yet adequate symbol of the most spectacular of the three great political forces whose resultant is the new Parliament, I have to abandon the complexities of London. I choose Brighton; it is more homogeneous; it serves me perfectly. Stand on the wide promenade opposite the Métropole at noon on a fine morning, especially at this season of the year, and you will see, stretching miles westward in the immense squares and terraces of Hove, and eastward in the grand hotels and genteel *pensions* of Brighton and Kemp Town, the most gigantic realisation of an ideal that the governing classes of any country ever reared. So gigantic and so complete that, whatever your scorn of the ideal celebrated, the monument must impress you. Brighton lives in, by and for the pleasures of the rich. Brighton is what they desired, and they have got it. It is a city of the conquerors and their slaves; and in no city could the division be straighter or more shameless. A fine sight! And the class that gradually created it must have, or have had, fine qualities. See them indolently passing to and fro in front of their lounges and their saloons and their refectories and their shops crammed with luxuries that they alone can buy; see them jewelled and furred and feathered and veiled as they arrogantly move along; they have harnessed for their traction steam, electricity, petrol, the horse, the ass, and even their own image of the Deity. See their picked policemen, the tallest in

England, standing in the mud, proud to protect them. See that image of the Deity with his head disguised as a hat-box and his body swollen to the shape of a steamer-trunk, paddling in the gutter to advise them that their slave the leather-goods merchant awaits orders. The wretch is not ashamed. They are not ashamed. No one is ashamed. They have said to the sea itself, "Thus far," and on all their palisades for miles runs the legend, cast in iron, in a classic tongue, "We trust in God!"

Enter the gorgeous lounge of one of the gorgeous hotels, and I will show you there three of the conquerors, with a hundred and eighty years between them. They have desired with sufficient vehemence, and therefore their desire has been fulfilled. The whole mechanism of the hotel, the whole mechanism of the town, is at their disposal. They are comfortable; they are replete. They are in this state, that their imagination cannot conceive delights which they cannot compass. They represent their class. And they are honest, respectable, kindly, educated and experienced. They have handled their fellow-creatures. They have travelled and seen the round world. And now listen to them on current politics. They call Lloyd George a cursed little Welsh rascal. They have no adequate epithet for Winston Churchill. They pity Henry Asquith for a helpless puppet. They say they could understand a Liberal of the Gladstone type. They say that the Radicals have no argument, never had one, and no men, and that as soon as you try to pin the Radicals to one point they escape to another. They say there cannot possibly be two honest opinions about Tariff Reform, the Lords, and National Defence. They say the country is mad. Then they say that they utterly refuse to believe that the country is mad. They almost shout that if the Radicals are returned England is eternally ruined. They are quite sincere. And finally they begin to stake champagne for and against the eternal ruin of England.

Reason has nothing to do with it. Instinct has everything to do with it, the profound instinct of self-preservation. They have naught to gain from politics. They are haunted by the terrible fear which haunts those who have got what they want, the fear of losing it. England has always been managed in their interests, and so it shall ever be. Democracy be damned! Are they not charitable? Why, their slaves the very policemen of Brighton have an organised charity for the poor! They will fight. They will use their tremendous powers. And they will fight the more ruthlessly because, despite their boasting, they

secretly know that they no longer possess all their old weapons. Intellect is not now at their service. It was once, but it has left them. Somehow intellect has gone over to this newly invented democracy! . . . In vain they praise F. E. Smith, who made a reputation in a moment by the adroit use of the word "washpot." In vain they mention the brains of the Cecils, Hugh and Robert, those ascetics of the twelfth century. In vain they speak majestically of Curzon the majestic. In vain they try to adore A. J. Balfour, while not comprehending him. Vulgarians, dreamers, pompous nonentities, hair-splitters, metaphysicians, cynics—uncreative, useless! They writhe for that their most energetic advocates are a converted Separatist and a patriotic naturalised Englishman who prefers not to sign the German name of his father. Oh, for a week of Joseph Chamberlain, though he be the greatest turncoat of them all! Chamberlain it was who in an ecstasy of inspiration gave them the rallying-cry they needed—Tariff Reform—at which they snatched chiefly because an articulate cry it was!

But the heavy handicap only increases their ardour and their doggedness. And if they have not intellect, they have all that money can buy, including the Press, and they have what money cannot buy, what they have won by their genuine qualities, the moral power to intimidate the conquered. They are indubitably respected by every factor of English life except the intellectual factor. Also they have enlisted by flattery the services of men expert in the new craft of swaying a crowd. So that even without sheer intellect they are splendidly formidable. See Brighton, the symbol, on the days before the election, and on the day of the election, and you will guess their formidableness. The place is under a perfectly polite reign of terror, brought about by the most ingenious and the most unscrupulous tactics. All the conquered wear with dutiful smiles the livery of the conquerors. The odalisques wear it, and the matrons. Even the dogs wear it. Even the teddy-bears—

Something to kiss and to cuddle—

wear it as they cling desperately to the hooded lamps of motor-cars. To look at the great streets of Brighton you would suppose that intellect and democracy had been shotted and flung over the piers into the obedient sea . . . And the result, yelled at with frantic joy by the conquered—a majority of eight thousand for the conquerors, and a gain of "four on a division"!

ELECTIONS AND THE DEMOCRATIC IDEA

II

There is no concrete symbol which will stand for the nether force in the elections as well as Brighton stands for the upper. Moreover, Brighton represents a clear ideal, it is the creation of the only class that either knew what it wanted or possessed the power to get it. Take the very opposite of Brighton; take one of the industrial districts in the Midlands, where everything is dirty and everything is ugly except the gorgeous nocturnal firework displays incidental to the working of iron. Take a great town in the vast majority of whose houses exists no enamelled bathroom, nor even that elementary convenience a vacuum-cleaner, nor a wine-cellar, nor a tradesmen's entrance, nor a servant's bell; a great town the vast majority of whose inhabitants have to work hard and long in monotonous, foul, distressing and dangerous conditions, and under quasi-military discipline, for a weekly wage that represents the price of one bottle of tip-top champagne. See a whole streetful of colliers go off in the night to spend eight hours naked on their backs in choking caverns where it is always night. See them come up out of the earth in the afternoon and board the tramcars like nigger-minstrels; and, if you draw away instinctively from their soiling touch, set yourself to wonder why in the name of heaven they don't use their brute force to wreck the tramcar. See the tram-driver with his vermilion face and his fine open-air roving career of fourteen hours a day at fourpence an hour, and nothing at the end of it save a chance of getting run in for manslaughter through lapsing for an instant from the infallibility of a god! See the young women scatter in thousands out of the deafening clatter of the mills, limply tripping to the task of cooking a meal before they can eat. None of these souls may follow a caprice during twelve out of seventeen waking hours. None may go for a walk on the pier because she feels like it. Discipline is steely: it must be. The freest souls are those of the little boys and little girls that slip barefoot through the greasy slime of the central streets offering newspapers to the breeze and the rain. And the most captive of all are the housewives in the back streets whom you never see except perhaps on a Sunday afternoon taking a stroll in the municipal terra-cotta park, or possibly in the cemetery.

You would think, the more carefully you inspected, that all this stood for a force purely and fiercely anti-Brighton. And you would be remarkably mistaken. There are, of course,

conquerors here, conquerors engaged in the daily act of conquest, mysterious people concealed in private offices, in private bars, or at the other end of telephone and telegraph wires. Few, relatively; but very strong. Some of them are openly pro-Brighton. Some of them pretend to be anti-Brighton, and a few really are anti-Brighton. It has to be remembered that though Whiggism has developed into Liberalism and Liberalism into Radicalism, the Whig mind just as much as the Tory mind is opposed to Radicalism. Large numbers of the conquering oligarchy to-day call themselves Radicals, and believe themselves to be Radicals, simply because their grandfathers were Whigs, simply from the habit of being in opposition to Toryism, or simply because the mere crassness of Toryism revolts them; not from conviction. But at intervals some tremendous test of Radicalism supervenes and these honest pseudo-Radicals go over to their proper place. Home Rule was such a test. The total abolition of the House of Lords will be another such test. Radicalism suffers continually from splits, and a Radical split is never healed, for it touches the essential. Toryism rarely suffers from splits, and a Tory split is always healed, for it never touches the essential.

Thus, in the concrete symbol of Radicalism, not only is there a powerful and confessed factor of Toryism, of the pro-Brighton; but a considerable portion of that which seems to be Radicalism—and spectacularly the most powerful Radicalism—is also pro-Brighton; and, exactly at the moment when the struggle is fiercest, that superficially imposing portion will turn round and feverishly obey the instructions of Brighton. This phenomenon has occurred again and again. Nor is it all. There is a numerous class of the conquered, which, utterly careless of its own interest, always comes to the aid of the conquerors at a pinch. It is, for example, the persons most likely to suffer from Tariff Reform—the small-respectable, with fixed salaries derived from banks and other corporations immortal but without souls—who may be counted on to vote for Tariff Reform. Insurance clerks, earning less than Lord Rothschild's valet, will consent to his edict that they must be voluntary warriors or starve, and will vote at his orders, though they are perfectly well aware that he would never raise their wages after he had raised the price of their loaves. This class is actuated more by snobbishness, by the desire to be at all costs correct, than by a prim fear of their fellow-conquered. They are like dogs, abject but splendid.

Even the nethermost mass, the rumbling inarticulate multi-

tude, the very basis and mother earth of society, the transcendent victim, tool and slave, is just as likely as not to spend its leisure in renewing the chains which bind it. Yet it has nothing to lose by a rising. It could not, unless by the reappearance of miracles, be appreciably worse off than it is; it could not certainly keep itself alive and support the upper layers less easily or more dangerously to itself. It possesses the strength to turn England upside down. Look at the miserable skirts of Birmingham and then look at Brighton, and then marvel that England is not turned upside down, and all loose ends of fetters brought into violent use as life-preservers. It does at first seem marvellous, this phenomenon of unstable equilibrium, but not on examination. Many of the conquered never see the conquerors nor the splendour and arrogance thereof. Many others have seen the splendour and arrogance and have found pleasure in the sight, regarding it as a circus whose disappearance would blight existence for them. Many have gone forth proudly to seek freedom, but have rolled slavishly home with ten glasses of glorious beer inside them. Many are entirely unaware that they are conquered. Many are fatalists. Many are hopeless. Many are too fatigued to put up a fight. The very lowest, those in most need of a weapon, have no weapon. And all but the very highest do not know how to hit even when they are ripe for hitting. If they forge a sword they will probably cut themselves first, and when they happen to get hold of a gun comrades must beware. Gullibility and hysteria—the two master-attributes of ignorance; apathy—the consequence of brutalisation; lack of self-discipline—the consequence of discipline by conquerors; mutual fear and mistrust, the result of unrestricted competition for restricted food and lodging: these are the vital defects which, in proportion as they exist, must prevent a rabble from becoming an army, and which amply explain some of the astounding figures thrown on screens at midnight during the last fourteen days.

All this has been said before, but it must be resaid at the proper times, and a proper time is now.

III

The third force in the elections is one which leavens the second, and which, having no spectacular quality at all, cannot be symbolised. Yet this force has made modern domestic politics what they are—that is to say, it has transformed what was chiefly a polite game into what is chiefly a genuine struggle—and it

alone renders progress possible, or any kind of movement desirable. I mean the democratic idea.

Among the millions of politicians, professional and amateur, in these islands, there are a few thousand men who believe passionately in the democratic idea at its widest. They believe that every adult man and woman is potentially capable of self-government, and that every adult man and woman must learn, by practice, to take a share in the general government. Not only do they hate the idea of a majority being exploited by a minority, as now ; but they hate equally the idea of a minority being exploited by a majority : and they will not be satisfied as long as the real interests of one single man or woman are sacrificed to those of the rest. In other words, they want nothing less than universal justice—what is called abstract justice ; and indeed there is no other kind. All other aims in the art of politics are clumsy, timid and—worse—unscientific, and contrary to the basic principle of sociological evolution.

But the supporters of the uncompromising democratic idea are strong, not mainly because the idea is the sole scientific idea, but because they believe in it religiously, because it is their creed, and because they have nothing to gain from its realisation except the satisfaction of their passion for justice. The men who fight the most powerfully, effectively and honestly against the established order to-day are altruists in the material sense and egoists in the spiritual sense. Their merit is that, so far as they are concerned, they change the plane of politics. Intellect of uncommon quality is needed to grasp the true significance of the uncompromising democratic idea. And courage of uncommon quality is needed to envisage calmly the dangers inevitable to its progress. Now intellect and courage can always win easily in the struggle for material welfare, if they set themselves to the task ; and there is no doubt that the finest contemporary democrats might gain tremendous prizes by reinforcing the established order. Only it happens that these tremendous prizes mean nothing to them. Ideas alone are real to them. They are religious. They are in possession of what is conceivably the only religion that has survived the huge upheavals of the nineteenth century.

These few thousand men are the life-blood of the Radical party. They inspire it. If they do not lead, they inspire the leaders. They refresh and cleanse its leaders after the foul demoralisation of daily contacts. They shame its leaders again and again into the narrow path. And by their careless and fine candour they alienate ultimately those leaders who are not

worthy to lead. They at once stimulate and purge. By mere transparent honesty of purpose, appealing to the simplest intelligence, they often achieve the miracle of convincing a populace that the democratic party is not after all a wing of Toryism disguised. They answer satisfactorily the very pertinent question of the simple: "Why should this clever individual be so anxious about *us?* What is he trying to get out of us?" They cannot be defeated; they must win; partly because by a happy dispensation of nature they have the most brains; partly because the intellectual will always tire out the material; and partly because they are on the side of science; the force that unfolds the bud is behind them.

IV

Is not the result of the election, then, disappointing? Should it not be deemed disappointing that in England, the country with on the whole the least unsatisfactory national characteristics, a finally overwhelming majority was not obtained against the two most reactionary proposals that have ever been put before the electorate—food-taxing and the extension of the hereditary principle?

Before indulging in cynicism, the observer should ponder upon one or two considerations. England is not, in reality, less truly democratic than Scotland, Ireland and Wales; but the latter three countries are less democratic than they seem to be. The progress of the democratic idea in the United Kingdom is due less to a general conviction than to an accident. Ireland and Wales fight against English Toryism because they have special grievances, and Scotland because of racial jealousy and mistrust. But neither the grievances nor the antipathy are based on the democratic idea. If Scotland were made a separate realm to-morrow, the effect would infallibly be a tremendous set-back to the democratic idea in Scotland, for the causes which now range a great deal of Scottish Toryism under the democratic flag would be removed. The same with Ireland and Wales. In estimating the significance of England's apparent backwardness in democracy, it must always be remembered that the forwardness of the other countries is only adventitious. England is not really backward. She is perhaps relatively forward. We must not delude ourselves by overestimating the genuine progress which democracy as a whole has yet accomplished.

Again, allowance must be made for the immense disad-

vantage under which the real inspirers and organisers of the democratic party are bound to work. That disadvantage does not spring from the material and moral ascendancy of Toryism. It does not even spring from the latitude allowed to Toryism by impartial popular opinion, though this constitutes a severe handicap. (Toryism can cut down naval estimates, can cede Heligoland to Germany, can muddle a war, can cry stinking fish, can flout the opinion of the Colonies, without losing caste in the general view. Whereas if democracy did any one of these things it would find itself in disgrace for twenty years.) The immense and supreme disadvantage of the true leaders of democracy springs from the distance which separates them, morally and intellectually, from the people whom they would help. For immediate success they are far too intellectual and too honest. They shrink from the intellectual humiliations incident to an election. They neither would nor could fight Toryism with its own weapons. When Toryism issues a leaflet stating that the return of the Radical party will mean "community of goods as well as wives; and maternity ordered or forbidden from headquarters," * democracy cannot reply on that plane. On that plane it is silent. When the Peers step down into the arena and assert that their sole desire is the will and the welfare of the People, democracy cannot produce a lie of the same telling grandeur. When Mr. Balfour, sole relic of intellectual distinction in his party, degrades his fineness before honest men and before history by chicane of which his own conscience is possibly the severest judge, democracy is saddened rather than infuriated to a response. . . . Believers in universal justice cannot even exercise a judicious intimidation. If the leaders of democracy, divorcing brain from conscience, cared to use the former to fight a General Election by methods similar to those of Toryism, the heavy and clumsy stupidity of Toryism, its small cunning, and its unimaginative unscrupulousness, would be crushed to impotence. But in the nature of things this cannot be. However, the abyss between the mentality of the true leaders and the mentality of the people narrows and must narrow every year.

Having paused upon these considerations, the observer will be pessimistic or optimistic according to his temperament.

But it is the *métier* of the idealist to be disappointed.

* Textual; in Wandsworth.

Balance-Sheet of a Twenty-Acre Holding

By F. E. Green

My first balance-sheet appeared in my little book, "How I work my Small Farm," where I gave a full description of my holding of 16 acres. These 16 acres brought in a profit of £47. My last balance-sheet was published in the February number of The English Review. This showed a profit of £51 on 25 acres. Since Michaelmas 1908 I have farmed 20 acres only, and the profit accruing from these comes to £38.

The holding now consists of 17 acres of grass land, and of 3 acres planted with fruit trees and bushes. In the fruit plantation, apple-trees form the most important stock, numbering some 500, and the other trees are damson and plum—about 250. The gooseberry and currant bushes amount to over 2000, and of these at least 1500 are gooseberry bushes. There is about half an acre altogether of strawberry plants, running up and down between the rows of fruit trees. My livestock consists of two cows, five heifers, three calves and two pigs (now sold to the butcher). I ought, perhaps, to add that there must be at least a million and a half willing workers equipped with wings in my apiary of twenty-eight hives, but I have neither the hardihood nor the patience to count these individually. There are, too, six pullets and one rooster free to roam over an unlimited range of feeding-ground, but their doings have been unrecorded.

The chief industry carried on hitherto has been that of milk production, but owing to the heavy amount of dairy work that this has entailed I have reduced my cows from four or five to two, substituting for the cows young heifers, home-weaned, to sell when they calve. It will be noticed that instead of rent I have charged myself with 4 per cent. on the capital sunk in the venture, for I am one of those who should be dear to the heart of Mr. Jesse Collings, M.P., and to Mr. Chesterton—I am a Peasant Proprietor.

My own labour performed on the land has not been very great, for I have been laid by the heels through illness a good deal during the year, and much time, especially on wet days—

and how many days were not wet last year ?—has been occupied in writing. The water-butts have never been empty, and the trickling stream, which has always hitherto dried up in July, last year never ceased from flowing.

I have picked fruit in the early morning hours, worked hard in the hayfield, kept the apiary almost unaided, pruned, hoed, and milked the cows and fed the stock on Saturdays and Sundays (to the annoyance of my friends); but beyond the work of conducting the business-side of the holding, buying and selling stock or selling the produce—really the most unpleasant as well as the most important part of the work—I have not done much continuous manual work this year.

Now this statement of mine should give the ordinary small holder some encouragement, for might he not truly say, "Here is a fellow who spends a good deal of his time scribbling, getting out of his holding of 20 acres enough to pay away £62 in wages, £33 in rent, and then is able to take a profit of £38 for himself." He, indeed, being a more strenuous worker than myself, might with a little help from his own family have earned the entire £62 wages as well as the £38 profit—making thus £110. And there is still more to be said. My holding is on stiff, unkind, starved Weald clay, standing on a hill-top swept by every wind of heaven, especially by the sou'-wester, which last summer laid low three standard plum-trees. Labour here, too, is heavier both for man and beast than on a flat farm. Moreover, the year has been overwhelmingly bountiful with its wet days, days when man, like the horse in the stable which has to be fed, spends profitless hours at odd-jobbing in some shed or other. Other drawbacks, greater than any of those which have been mentioned, are that the holding lies seven miles from a town and three from a station, is set amid sporting preserves and environed by a wilderness of individualism.

Then there are my mistakes and fatalities—mistakes which have brought profits down with a run. A sow, which should have presented me with two litters in the year if properly attended to, adding another £10 to my income, had to be sold off as a barrener. One cow refused to become a mother at the right time, and lost me the sale of her milk just when I most needed it. My apple-trees, which were full of bloom after winter spraying, might have brought me a bumper crop if I had not failed to give them an arsenical washing in the spring to prevent the aphis and the caterpillar from running riot through my heritage. Then, too, one must consider that the prices obtainable for fruit during this drenching year have been phenominally low; and yet there is a silver lining to this cloud,

for my receipts for fruit-growing have risen from £25 to £41. The ceaseless procession of storm-clouds in June and July told against my bees, which failed to gather the delicious nectar of the white clover, and, instead, stored their cells with honey-dew as dark as the shadow of oaks from which it had been gathered.

Small as the total net profits have been, I yet have the satisfaction of knowing that from three derelict grass-fields, which as part of a large farm did not yield sufficient to support even half a man, I have produced enough to keep at least two men and have, moreover, added my quota to the wealth of the nation.

It will be noticed that no horse is kept on my holding. I do not believe in keeping a horse until the amount of saleable produce warrants its upkeep. The time has now arrived, though, when I ought to have a horse, not to carry cheap and bulky crops to market, but for the conveyance of small, neat packages of butter, honey, fruit, eggs, and bacon; for it is in the production of these higher priced and less bulky articles, marketed co-operatively, that lies the hope of the small holder.

Marketing is still the bane of the small holder's life. Small quantities of farm-produce are too often sold to dealers at low prices owing to the inability of the individual small holder to make up a "load." I could, moreover, produce and sell three times the amount that I do from my land if I knew that there was a co-operative cart waiting at the gate as there would be in Denmark ready to take my stuff away. Surely what has been done for Ireland in the way of co-operative creameries, bacon factories, egg depots and credit banks might also be done for rural England? Our Government has led the people in sight of the Promised Land, but has left them still hungry, with their feet upon an untilled inheritance.

BALANCE-SHEET: MICHAELMAS 1908 TO MICHAELMAS 1909

Dr.

	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
To Cows:						
Cake, bran, meal, &c.	12	0	6			
Straw for litter and thatching	2	0	6			
Mowing and carrying hay	4	6	0			
Service of bull	0	10	0			
Beer for haymakers	0	7	6			
				19	4	6
To Stock Account:						
Value of stock, Michaelmas 1908	88	0	0			
Cattle bought	30	10	0			
				118	10	0
To Bees:						
Sugar and requisites	0	19	2			
Surrey Bee-Keepers' Association (subscription)	0	5	0			
				1	4	2

To Pigs:			
Value of young sow (Michaelmas 1908)	2 15 0		
Bran and middlings	2 16 0		
Pigs bought	2 18 0		
		8	9 0
To Fruit and Vegetables:			
Seeds	1 3 3		
Straw and punnets for strawberries	1 11 9		
Cartage of produce	1 12 3		
Manure-carting	0 12 0		
		4	19 3
To Labour		62	11 6
,, Interest on Capital (£814 at 4 per cent.)		32	11 2
,, Tithes		1	18 5
,, Rates		3	10 0
,, Insurance		0	15 6
,, Repairs (fencing, &c.)		1	5 0
,, Profit		38	9 3
		£293	7 9

Cr.

By Cows:			
Butter and milk sold and consumed	47 0 8		
Value of haystack	32 10 0		
		79	10 8
By Stock Account:			
Cattle sold	55 3 0		
Value of stock (Michaelmas 1909)	90 10 0		
		145	13 0
By Bees:			
Honey sold (334 lb.)	13 5 11		
Wax	0 3 0		
Bees and sundries sold	3 5 0		
Two swarms added to stock	1 10 0		
		18	3 11
By Fruit and Vegetables:			
Strawberries	14 14 3		
Gooseberries	7 14 6		
Black cu rants	1 2 10		
Red currants	1 4 0		
Raspberries	1 0 0		
Apples	2 14 9		
Plums	0 6 0		
Damsons	0 10 9		
Rhubarb	1 0 10		
Vegetables sold and consumed	6 13 3		
Potatoes	2 0 0		
Vegetables unharvested	2 0 0		
		41	1 2
By Pigs:			
Sow sold	3 15 0		
Porkers	5 4 0		
		8	19 0
		£293	7 9

Publications Received

BELLES-LETTRES, ETC.

*Giovanni Boccaccio. By Edward Hutton. Numerous Illustrations. xxviii+426: 6×9 in. John Lane. 16s. net.

BIOGRAPHY

Campion's Works. Edited by Percival Vivian. With 13 facsimile title-pages and other illustrations. lxvi+400: 9×6 in. Clarendon Press, Oxford. 10*s.* 6*d.* net.

Mr. Percival Vivian has given us in this volume a minute and critical biography of Thomas Campion. It includes the Latin poems and the prose treatises, also the masques and shorter poems. It affords the student of literature of this epoch a comprehensive reference to this poet's works. It is done with a thoroughness and attention to detail quite excellent. We quote from the introduction :—" One other aspect of Campion's verse should be noticed, the extraordinary fluidity and lack of stability in his rhythms. This again is referable to the purpose of musical composition with which they were written. The marriage of music to Campion's verse was no casual or one-sided union; nor was music a mistress with whom his poetry dallied, while possessed of more serious interest. Words and music were born for each other, and in their wedding was consummated the only object of their existence."

" He says himself: ' In these English Ayres I have chiefly aymed to couple my words and notes lovingly together, which will be much for him to doe that hath not power over both,' from which it seems that the result proceeded not only from spontaneous causes, but also from conscious effort. Again, it is to this quality that Davies alludes in the lines already quoted :

" Never did Lyrichs more then happie *straines*
(Straind out of *Arte* by *nature*, so with ease),
So purely hitt the *moods* and various *Vaines*
Of musich and her *Hearers* as do these."

DRAMA

The "Brother Luiz de Sousa" of Viscount de Almeida Garrett. Done into English by Edgar Prestage. 137: 6½ × 5 in. Elkin Mathews. 2*s.* net.

This is an excellent translation, with a very helpful preface, of a play which is the foundation of modern Portuguese Drama. It is gloomily romantic in tone, but its gloom and its romance are alike so unusual in texture that it may well rank as a masterpiece.

* A review of this will follow in due course.

FICTION

BLACK SHEEP. By Stanley Portal Hyatt. 274: 7½ × 5 in. T. Werner Laurie. 6*s*. net.

This novel has been refused circulation by the Libraries' Combine. It contains nothing that by any stretch of the imagination could be considered as conducive to vice. It is, on the contrary, a naive and gentle pleading along the lines of most conventional morality for mercy for the unfortunate. Mr. Hyatt is a young writer of great earnestness of purpose, and though this is not his best book, we trust that all our readers will persistently ask for it at their libraries.

THE STREET WITH SEVEN HOUSES. By Sylvia Brett. 277: 7½ × 4 in. Hodder and Stoughton. 6*s*. net.

Miss Brett has a pretty, melancholy fancy and these stories have about them a real delicacy of touch: they call to mind for that reason the Petersburg Tales of Miss Olive Garnett, a book which has never been sufficiently appreciated. If Miss Brett will pay a little attention to the material side of her stories she may well become an author of importance.

HISTORY, ARCHÆOLOGY, ETC.

*CRETE THE FORERUNNER OF GREECE. By C. H. and H. Hawes. xiv+151: 7 × 4¼ in.: Index. Harper and Brothers. 2*s*. 6*d*. net.

*GEORGE I. AND THE NORTHERN WAR. By J. F. Chance. xviii+488: 9 × 5½ in.: Index. Smith Elder and Co. 14*s*. net.

PERIODICALS

THE THRUSH. Vol. I., No. 1. Edited by Noel H. Wills. 1*s*. net. Chapman and Hall.

The Thrush is a venture that we may well welcome, for it aims at establishing itself as a periodical devoted solely to Modern Poetry. The adventure is praiseworthy but we very much wonder how practicable it may prove. For although Mr. Hueffer in an article instinct with the eloquent looseness that we expect of him, assures us that England is a nest of singing birds, we doubt whether, all together, they will be able to produce a sufficiency of really fine or really significant lyrics that fill an entire magazine year in year out. We imagine that it might be more practical to make *The Thrush* an occasional rather than a regular periodical. In this way it might be sure of containing contributions all of which were "up to the mark." But in any case the venture is a very creditable one and deserves our heartiest commendation. The present number contains contributions by: Ethel Clifford, Douglas Goldring, Allen Upward, Thomas Bouch, and many others.

SOCIAL ECONOMICS

THE CAMEL AND THE NEEDLE'S EYE. By Arthur Ponsonby. 187. 7½ × 5 in. A. C. Fifield. 3*s*. 6*d*. net.

Mr. Ponsonby has given us a most lucid and realistic description of the riches

* Reviews of these will follow in due course.

and poverty and of the extremes of society. The contrast of the weekly bill of a man, wife, and child who live on 9*s.* 5½*d.* with that of an "unemployed man," the family consisting of four and fourteen servants who spend £60 12*s.* 7*d.* in the week, is interesting. He ends by saying:

"If the money ideal could only be discarded with the same universal alacrity and conviction with which it is now clung to and cherished, the change and improvement in our social life would be as miraculous and yet as natural as the change from the dark chill of winter to the sunshine of spring."

VERSE

BEAUDELAIRE: The Flowers of Evil. Translated into English verse by Cyril Scott. 64: 6½ × 5 in. Elkin Mathews. 1*s.*, wrapper 1*s.* 6*d.* net, cloth.

It is difficult to give the fresh charm of the original in a translation more especially when it is verse to be translated Some of these poems are, however, well turned, "Benediction" being one of the best. Some others seem to lack a certain rhythm.

SISINA

Imagine Diana in gorgeous array,
How into the forests and thickets she flies,
With her hair in the breezes and flushed for the fray
How the very best riders she proudly defies.

Have you seen Théroigne, of the blood-thirsty heart,
As an unshod herd to attach he bestirs,
With cheeks all inflamed, playing up to his part,
As he goes, sword in hand, up the royal stairs ?

And so is Sisina—yet this warrior sweet,
Has a soul with compassion and kindness replete,
Inspired by drums and by powder, her sway

Knows how to concede to the supplicant's prayers,
And her bosom, laid waste by the flames, has alway,
For those that are worthy, a fountain of tears.

MARIONETTES. By Francis Macnamara. 96: 7½ × 5 in. Elkin Mathews. 3*s.* 6*d.* net.

Mr. Macnamara is a poet of some skill, his verse flows and is easily readable. He writes on subjects the most varied, chiefly, however, on religious themes and historical events, but we were glad to see the few on modern subjects—"Salute to the Empire Ballet," "An Ode to La Tortajada," and "An Ode to a Stoppeuse."

THE PILGRIMAGE. By Yone Noguchi. 2 volumes. xi + 142: 7½ × 5¼ in. Elkin Mathews. 8*s.* net.

Mr. Yone Noguchi writing in English is an undoubted poet, and we can well believe that writing in Japanese he is a very great one. His English verse has, as is natural, hardly any rhythm and his actual sense of words in English appears to be small. Nevertheless, he contrives to combine a sense of images, of bright colour, and of motion. He is, of course, at his best in painting little pictures—he has the

plastic artist's eye. So that in our dull and grey world there are very many much worse things that one might do than read his poems

RIGHT AND LEFT

The mountains green at my right :
The sunlight yellow at my left :
The laughing winds pass between.

The river white at my left :
The flowers red at my right :
The laughing girls go beween.

The clouds sail away at my right ;
The birds flap down at my left :
The laughing moon appears between.

I turned left to the dale of poem ;
I turned right to the forest of Love :
But I hurry Home by the road between.

SONGS AND SONNETS. By Logan Pearsall Smith. 64 : 6½ × 5 in. Elkin Mathews. 1*s.* 6*d.* net.

Mr. Logan Pearsall Smith's new volume has at least one singular distinction—one peculiar assurance. For in his Foreword he assures us that though his poems meet with no appreciation, there will yet be one reader who will see in them all enchantment and all delight—and that reader will be the writer. This is a quaint, immodest modesty, but we hope that Mr. Smith's volume may find a few more readers amongst men of goodwill. For his poems have a certain music and a certain tranquillity that are not unattractive.

RAIN IN OXFORD

Last night upon my roof the raindrops fell
With windy patter, sudden, loud and sweet ;
The din of many waters filled the street,
Of little rushing streams innumerable ;
From spout and dripping eaves they poured pell-mell,
Then hurried onwards with their eddies fleet,
To wash the dust away, and all the heat
That long had held the city in its spell.

Half in a dream I heard the passing shower ;
Beyond the town I floated on the breeze,
I felt the meadows freshen in that hour,
The cool and happy shiver of the trees.
I heard the raindrops falling, barren dower !
On shadowy streams, and tranquil summer seas.

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